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# USSR Report

MILITARY AFFAIRS  
MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No. 6, June 1984

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31 October 1984

**USSR REPORT  
MILITARY AFFAIRS**

**MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL**

No 6, June 1984

Except where indicated otherwise in the table of contents the following is a complete translation of the Russian-language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL.

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## DEVELOPMENT, TASKS OF DEFENSE SOCIETY REVIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 3-9

[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Col A. Gromakov, "To Raise Defenders of the Motherland"]

[Text] From the first days of the formation of our socialist state, the question arose of its defense. International imperialism did not wish to accept its defeat. In addition to the financial and military aid to the counter-revolutionaries, it organized military intervention against the young Soviet republic. The Communist Party and V. I. Lenin, in undertaking measures to defeat the internal and external enemies of our country, carried out truly titanic work to establish the Worker-Peasant Red Army [RKKA] and to increase the defense capability of the young Soviet state; they constantly sought out ways for the involvement of all the people in defending the victories of October against the aggressors. "...Be on guard, defend the defense capability of our nation and our Red Army like the apple of your eye..."<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin urged the workers at the Ninth All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

The Communist Party has been constantly concerned with the nation-wide nature of defending the socialist fatherland and for broadly involving the Soviet people in defense work. In carrying out this task a major role has been assigned to the public organizations.

One of the first defense organizations in our country was the Military Scientific Society (VNO) founded in October 1920 under the RKKA Military Academy. M. V. Frunze was elected its first chairman. The VNO organizations published and disseminated works on military affairs and propagandized military knowledge in the working masses. At the plants, factories and institutions, military knowledge circles were established and in these the workers, primarily the youth, mastered shooting, the bases of tactics and prepared to become able defenders of the motherland.

In giving great importance to the VNO as a mass patriotic organization of the workers contributing to greater defense capability of the nation, the USSR SNK [Soviet of People's Commissars] on 27 July 1926 renamed it the Society for Assisting Defense (OSO).

Its primary collectives were cells at enterprises, institutions and institutions of learning and which were part of the rayon, city, oblast, kray and republic organizations. By October 1926 in them they had established 7,200 military knowledge circles, they had organized over 4,000 libraries of special training literature and set up 3,760 defense corners.<sup>2</sup>

The search for ways to involve the Soviet people in defense work was not limited to the OSO society. In the nation volunteer defense organizations arose such as the Society of Friends of the Air Forces (ODVF, 1923), and the Society of Friends for Chemical Defense and the Chemical Industry (Dobrokhim, 1924); in 1925 these were merged in the USSR Aviakhim.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the OSO and Aviakhim consistently carried out Lenin's ideas on the defense of the socialist fatherland and involved the masses of workers in military construction and strengthening national defense. At the same time practice showed that for successfully carrying out the tasks of strengthening the might of the Soviet state, these organizations had to be united. On 23 January 1927, there was a joint session of the delegates of the First All-Union Aviakhim Congress and participants of the OSO Plenum. Here a decision was taken to merge the societies into the "Union of Societies of Friends of Defense and Aviation-Chemical Construction of the USSR," or its abbreviated form Osoaviakhim.

The Communist Party showed great concern for the development of the defense society and directed its work. In the Decrees of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee "On the Work of Osoaviakhim" (19 March 1928), "On Osoaviakhim" (23 February 1932), of the VKP(b) Central Committee and the USSR SNK "On Osoaviakhim" (8 August 1935) and in other documents, along with high praise for its activities, shortcomings were pointed out as well as the ways of eliminating them. The task was set of ensuring not only mass defense work but also better training of reserves for the army and navy under the conditions of heightened international tension.

The organizations of the defense society, in being guided by the party and government instructions, initiated active work aimed at improving the quality of military training for the workers. Osoaviakhim was the initiator of carrying out mass military patriotic measures, including: weeks and 10 days of defense work, collecting money for the national defense fund, military hikes for the youth to the sites of Red Army battles, organizing various technical schools and so forth.

The Komsomol members of Leningrad, the Far East and the Ukraine, in the spring of 1934, came forward with the initiative of having each Komsomol member pass a military-technical exam. The Komsomol Central Committee, the AUCCTU and the Osoaviakhim Central Council supported their initiative. At the start of 1935, the first results were given. In Leningrad alone some 102,000 Voroshilov marks-men had been trained, there were 140,000 winners of the GTO [Ready for Labor and Defense] insignias, 72,000 holders of the GSO [Ready for Medical Defense] insignias and 3,226 glider flyers.

In speaking at the 7th Congress of Soviets, the USSR Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, M. N. Tukhachevskiy pointed out: "When one speaks about the

training of Red Armymen, one cannot help but mention the work done in Osoaviakhim. Here millions of the worker-peasant population are trained to join the ranks of the Red Army and are trained so that in wartime they fight with modern military knowledge. Retraining is an exceptionally important task and year by year it is carried out with ever-greater intensity by our Osoaviakhim.<sup>13</sup>

Great mass defense work was carried out in line with the appeal of the Ninth Komsomol Congress, "Komsomol member, to your aircraft!" Thousands of young men and women arrived at the air clubs of the defense society in order to become pilots, parachutists and glider pilots. By its 10th birthday the society already had 150 air clubs, 240 glider stations with 2,000 gliders and 600 parachute towers.

In line with the growing threat of war, under the primary organizations groups and teams were established for training riflemen, signalmen, motorcycle drivers, motor vehicle operators and other specialists while detachments were organized under the rayon and city Soviets and in the other major primary organizations of Osoaviakhim. As a total at the start of 1941 in the Osoaviakhim system there were 156,000 groups, 26,680 teams and 3,500 detachments. From 1930 through 1941, 121,000 pilots, 122,000 parachutists and 27,000 glider pilots were trained. More than 6 million members of Osoaviakhim passed the standards for the insignia "Voroshilov Marksmen."<sup>14</sup>

Osoaviakhim made a worthy contribution to the victory of our people in the Great Patriotic War. During the first months of the war, more than 7.2 million members of the society left for the front either by mobilization or volunteer. A majority of them went directly into the units of the operational army as they had the necessary military and military-technical training.

Osoaviakhim took an active part in the system of vsevobuch (universal military training), having made available to the military commissariats tens of thousands of instructor commanders and providing training facilities for the exerciss. Snipers, machine gun operators, signalmen, drivers and parachutists were trained while on the job. By September 1941, more than 7 million persons were studying military affairs along with their job.

Hundreds of thousands of graduates of the defense society received decorations of the motherland, around a thousand became Heroes of the Soviet Union, many became twice Heroes while the famous pilots Alexandre Ivanovich Pokryshkin and Ivan Nikitich Kozhedub received this high title three times.

The snipers trained in Osoaviakhim demonstrated great art on the fronts. Born during the winter of 1941-1942 at Leningrad, the sniper movement found a vital response in the units and subunits of the other fronts. The initiators of it were the Komsomol members and former Osoaviakhim members Feodosiy Smolyachkov, Petr Golichenkov and Ivan Vezhlivtsev. The former Osoaviakhim members, snipers Il'ya Grigor'yev, Aleksandr Kalinin, Lyudmila Pavlichenko and others became Heroes of the Soviet Union.

The Communist Party and Soviet government had high regard for the activities of Osoaviakhim. In 1947, on the occasion of its 20th anniversary, Osoaviakhim was awarded the Order of the Red Banner.<sup>15</sup>

During the postwar period there were constant searches for improving the defense society in accord with the tasks of further strengthening national defense capability. In 1948, Osoaviakhim was split into three societies: assistance to aviation (DOSAV), to the army (DOSARM) and the Navy (DOSFLLOT). However, practice showed that along with positive trends in the activities of the societies there were also negative ones. The reorganization had led to the scattering of funds assigned to develop defense work. In this regard in 1951, the USSR Council of Ministers approved the decision to unite the societies in the USSR DOSAAF.

The Decree of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers of 7 May 1966 "On the State and Measures to Improve the Work of the All-Union Volunteer Society for Assisting the Army, Aviation and Navy" outlined the basic directions, goals and tasks for DOSAAF under present-day conditions. This was a long-term program for the activities of DOSAAF considering the development prospects of the Soviet state and its Armed Forces.

During the period which has passed since the adopting of the decree, DOSAAF has grown numerically, its organizational structure has been strengthened and the leadership stabilized. The number of DOSAAF members has increased from 54 million to 105 million persons. At present, in the nation there are virtually no labor and student collectives where the defense organization is not active.

Within DOSAAF are the 14 DOSAAF Central Committees of the Union republics, 159 kray and oblast committees, 4,429 rayon, city and okrug committees. In light of the party's instructions and the decisions of the Ninth All-Union DOSAAF Congress (February 1983), significant work has been done to strengthen the levels of the leadership bodies and systematize their staff structure. At present, DOSAAF possesses politically mature, well-trained and dedicated personnel. Around 6 million members of the committees and auditing commissions, sports clubs and federations, instructor and lecturer groups, volunteer coaches and umpires volunteer their forces, knowledge and experience to the military patriotic indoctrination and military-technical training of the Soviet people and to developing technical and paramilitary types of sports. A majority of the volunteers are veterans of the Great Patriotic War as well as retired and reserve officers. They are the living bearers of the heroic traditions of the Soviet people. In speaking at a meeting with the veterans of the Soviet Armed Forces, the Chairman of the USSR DOSAAF Central Committee, Hero of the Soviet Union, Flt Adm G. Yegorov, emphasized that at present more than one-third of the inductees in the DOSAAF training organizations acquire specialties essential both for the Armed Forces and for work in the national economy. They are trained as worthy defenders of the motherland, as professionally prepared, physically strong and tenacious by the teachers and instructors of the DOSAAF training facilities with 60 percent of these being Army and Navy veterans.<sup>6</sup>

At present, under the conditions of the growing threat of war, the role of DOSAAF in strengthening national defense capability has assumed even greater importance. The numerical growth of the Society as well as the increased activeness and effectiveness of its work convincingly show that the DOSAAF patriotic activities are close to and understood by the Soviet people and they view this as their vital own concern. In joining the ranks of DOSAAF, the Soviet

people thereby expressed their determination in every possible way to aid in strengthening national defense capability and a readiness to defend with weapons in hand the victories of socialism and communism. "We are constantly concerned," said the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, Comrade K. U. Chernenko, in a speech at a meeting with voters on 2 March 1984, "with training youth who does not flinch and does not bend under the burden of the historic responsibility for the fate of the nation and for the fate of socialism and peace."<sup>7</sup>

At present, the activities of DOSAAF are characterized by a greater scale. Under the leadership of the party and soviet bodies and in close conjunction with the trade unions and Komsomol, the Znaniye [Knowledge] Society, the Army and Navy political bodies, the military commissariats, the Civil Defense staffs, the Soviet War Veterans Committee and other state and public organizations, DOSAAF is carrying out diverse work in the area of the military-patriotic and international indoctrination of the workers.

Great experience in military-patriotic work has been gained by the DOSAAF committees of Moscow, Leningrad, Volgograd, Bryansk, Omsk, Kuybyshev, Rostov and other oblasts of the RSFSR, Belorussia, the Ukraine and Latvia. Here this is reflected in the comprehensive plans of the party bodies and is carried out under their direct supervision and leadership. This makes it possible to organize the indoctrination of the workers and the youth in a differentiated manner.

The forms and methods of military-patriotic indoctrination each year have assumed an evermore diverse nature. There is greater practice in holding the months and weeks of mass defense work, the all-Union hike of Komsomol members and youth to the sites of revolutionary, military and labor glory of the Soviet people, the Zarnitsa [Summer Lightning] and Orlenok [Eaglet] paramilitary games, the all-Union commemorative watch in honor of the Great Victory and the all-Union week of revolutionary glory devoted to the anniversaries of October. There is a broader network of faculties, clubs, lecture and movie series on military-patriotic problems, future soldier clubs and so forth. Greater scope is being assumed by the patriotic youth movement commenced upon the initiative of the Komsomol and supported by the DOSAAF organizations to establish a chronicle of the Great Patriotic War. Ever-wider scope is being assumed by the collecting of materials on frontline veterans and the involvement of DOSAAF members in creating monumental complexes, memorial monuments and signs perpetuating the heroic feat of our people in the struggle for the liberty and independence of the motherland. This has made it possible for the young men and women to come closer to the heroic past of the motherland and disclose unknown pages in the historical chronicle of the military and labor feats of the older generations. Practical involvement in the military-patriotic measures has impelled the youth not only to know the heroic history of the motherland but also to make a specific contribution to the nation-wide cause of strengthening its economic and defense might.

Under conditions where the Army and Navy are being equipped with modern complex combat equipment, with the increased intensity of troop and naval service and the increased physical strains, the training of the induction youth has assumed particularly important significance. This is demanded by the

present-day international situation. The aggressive circles of imperialism are continuing a fierce arms race. The present U.S. administration has shown particular activity in this regard.

Naturally, the aggressive preparations of imperialism have forced the Soviet government to take response measures. "The strengthening of defense capability," emphasized the member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Minister of Defense, Mar SU D. F. Ustinov. "Is the guarantee for dependable security of the Soviet state and the other countries of the socialist commonwealth. This objectively serves the cause of preserving peace in the world. The Communist Party and the Soviet people are doing and will do everything so that the defense might of our motherland and the combat readiness of the Armed Forces be on a high level."<sup>8</sup>

In accord with the USSR Law "Governing Universal Military Service," DOSAAF has been entrusted with the training of specialists for the Armed Forces, basic military training for future soldiers and disseminating technical knowledge of applied military importance among the workers. At present, one out of every three inductees obtains one out of forty military-technical specialties in DOSAAF. A majority of the DOSAAF schools is located in well-built buildings, they have driving grounds, radio and radar ranges, specialized classrooms and programmed instruction classrooms, laboratories for practical work, garages, service stations and shops. In recent years, the fleet of training vehicles has been replaced and modern electronic equipment and radios have been purchased. DOSAAF has a number of training organizations which in terms of their technical equipping and level of the training indoctrinal process correspond to vocational-technical schools or specialized secondary schools. These include, for example, the Third Moscow Air Club, the Dneprodzerzhinsk, Slutsk and Taganrog Motor Vehicle Schools, the Bryansk, Zhdanov and Voronezh Naval Schools, the Shyauiyay and Tikhvin United Technical Schools and the Minsk and Kharkov Radiotechnical [Radar] Schools. Some 130 DOSAAF training organizations have received the honorary title of "Exemplary."

All of this has made it possible to carry out in a prompt and effective manner the assignments for training for the Armed Forces the drivers, mechanics, electricians, radio specialists, parachutists and divers. A majority of the students successfully passes the graduation exams. The highest results in training specialists for the Armed Forces are found in the DOSAAF organizations of Belorussia, Armenia, Moscow, Kiev, Riga, Omsk, Rostov and Volgograd Oblasts. They have repeatedly been awarded the Red Banners of the USSR Ministry of Defense and the military councils of the districts and fleets.

Training personnel for the national economy holds a major place in the work of the DOSAAF organizations. While in the 1960's gave the national economy 1.3-1.4 million specialists in the mass technical professions, now the figure is 2.0-2 million. Just over the period from 1977 through 1982, 12.1 million tractor operators, combine operators, drivers of various types of transport, aviation, naval and radio specialists have been trained and retrained.

In accord with the Decree of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers "On Further Increasing the Mass Scope of Physical Culture and Sports,"

the USSR DOSAAR Central Committee has outlined the tasks for the DOSAAF organizations in further developing technical and paramilitary types of sports. Just from 1977 through 1982, the number of athletes engaged in the technical and paramilitary types of sports has increased from 29.3 million to 32 million persons. Over the last five-year plan, some 7,714 USSR masters of sports and 22.5 million rated athletes were trained, including 357,000 candidate masters of sports and first-category athletes.<sup>9</sup>

With the start of the space age, space equipment has become part of the daily life of DOSAAF. In October 1978, two artificial satellites designed for ham radio communications were put into a space orbit. In December 1981, a carrier missile was launched carrying six satellites with equipment for ham radio communications. The cosmonauts Yuriy Gagarin, Paval Popovich, Valeriy Bykovskiy, Valentina Tereshkova, Svetlana Savitskaya and others began their careers from DOSAAF airfields.

The DOSAAF organizations endeavor in practice to realize their existing opportunities for merging military-patriotic indoctrination and military-technical training into a single unbroken process. On the basis of this the future soldiers develop a sound ideological conviction and a readiness with weapons in hand to defend the security of the Soviet people.

In its daily work, DOSAAF proceeds from the party's demands to improve mass defense work and to increase the quality of training for specialists for the Armed Forces and national economy. With a feeling of enthusiasm and gratitude, the DOSAAF members accepted the praise for their activities in the greetings of the CPSU Central Committee to the Ninth Congress: "The party highly values the contribution of DOSAAF to carrying out Lenin's ideas on involving the broad masses in strengthening national defense capability. In the DOSAAF organizations millions of Soviet people from different nationalities undergo schooling in patriotism and courage and gain the military-technical knowledge and skills essential for carrying out their sacred duty of defending the socialist fatherland."<sup>10</sup>

In approaching the national holiday of the 40th anniversary of the Great Victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany, the DOSAAF members are endeavoring to carry out the tasks confronting them as well as possible, they are developing the socialist competition to achieve new advances in mass defense work and are helping the young people become strong, bold and ready to carry out a feat for the sake of the motherland.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 44, p 300.

<sup>2</sup> See: "Dvazhdy ordenonosnoye oboronnoye" [Twice Order-Winning Defense Society], 3d Edition, Revised and Supplemented, Moscow, Izd-vo DOSAAF, 1983, p 20.

<sup>3</sup> "Krasnoznamennoye oboronnoye" [The Red-Banner Defense Society], 2d Supplemented Edition, Moscow, Izd-vo DOSAAF, 1975, p 67.

<sup>4</sup> "Krasnoznamennoye oboronnoye," pp 77, 78; "Dvazhdy Krasnoznamennoye...," p 72.

<sup>5</sup> See: P. Shatunov, "DOSAAF SSSR" [USSR DOSAAF], Moscow, Izd-vo DOSAAF, 1959, p 42.

<sup>6</sup> See: KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 15 December 1983.

<sup>7</sup> PRAVDA, 3 March 1984.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19 November 1983.

<sup>9</sup> "DOSAAF SSSR ot VIII k IX s"yezdu" [The USSR DOSAAF from the 8th to 9th Congresses], Moscow, Izd-vo DOSAAF, 1983, pp 33-35.

<sup>10</sup> SOVETSKIY PATRIOT, 17 February 1983.

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DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET MILITARY ART IN BELORUSSIAN OPERATION TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press  
23 May 84) pp 10-18

[Unattributed article: "Soviet Military Art in the Belorussian Operation of 1944"]

[Text] In the summer of 1944, on the territory of Belorussia, the Baltic and the eastern regions of Poland, in a zone of more than 1,100 km and up to 600 km deep, one of the major operations of the Great Patriotic War got underway, the Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation.

By the end of May, the line of contact between the sides in Belorussia ran from the line of Lake Neshcherdo, to the east of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Zhlobin, then along the Pripyat River, to the east of Kovel, forming an enormous eastward-facing salient. Here the Soviet troops were opposed by the right-flank formations of the 16th Army of the Army Group North, the Army Group Center (3d Tank, 4th, 9th and 2d Field Armies) and the left-flank formations of the 4th Tank Army of the Army Group Northern Ukraine. This grouping had 63 divisions and 2 brigades numbering some 1.2 million men, over 9,500 guns and mortars, 900 tanks and assault guns supported from the air by an air grouping of the 6th and partially the 1st and 4th Air Fleets consisting of 1,350 aircraft.<sup>1</sup>

The Nazi Command was intending at any price to hold the so-called "Belorussian Balcony" which was strategically advantageous for it. It wrongly assumed that the Soviet Army on the central sector would be able to make only a secondary strike and excluded the probability of employing a significant number of tanks here. At the same time it felt that the forested-swampy and lake terrain would impede the maneuvering by the Soviet troops which would be forced to advance along the road and this would facilitate the conduct of stubborn defensive actions by the German troops.

The preparations for the Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation, known under the code name of Bagration, were carried out in April-May 1944. For conducting it a powerful grouping was established consisting of the First Baltic, the Third, Second and First Belorussian Fronts having a total of 20 all-arms, 2 tank and 4 air armies (166 rifle divisions, 12 tank and mechanized corps, 7 fortified areas, 21 brigades and other formations and units). In them were 2.4 million men, more than 36,000 guns and mortars, 5,200 tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and 5,300 combat aircraft.<sup>2</sup>

The plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command was to crush the basic forces of Army Group Center by deep thrusts by the four fronts, to liberate Soviet Belorussia and establish the prerequisites for a subsequent offensive by the Soviet Army into the western oblasts of the Ukraine, Baltic, East Prussia and Poland. Here they planned to break through the enemy defenses simultaneously in six areas and then surround and destroy the enemy flank groupings at Vitebsk and Bobruysk. Later, in developing a pincers offensive against Minsk using the forces of three fronts, to throw back the surviving enemy troops to a depth of 200-250 km, to cut off their escape routes and then surround and destroy them. Subsequently, they planned to increase the force of the thrust, to broaden the zone of advance, to create a breach in the strategic front of the enemy defenses of several hundred kilometers and by rapid pursuit to deprive the enemy of the possibility of digging in on intermediate lines.

In terms of the nature of the combat operations and the content of the missions to be carried out, the Belorussian Operation was divided into two stages.

In the morning of 22 June, the First Baltic, Third and Second Belorussian Fronts successfully conducted a reconnaissance in force. In a number of areas the forward battalions drove from 1.5 to 6 km into the enemy defenses. On 23 June, the main forces of these fronts went over to the offensive and on the following day the troops on the right wing of the First Belorussian Front. During 23-26 June, the tactical defenses were broken in all areas and the mobile groups of the armies and fronts were committed to battle. During the first stage (23 June-4 July) the troops of the fronts successfully conducted the Vitebsk-Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruysk, Polotsk and Minsk Offensive Operations. Over the 12 days of continuous advance, the main forces of the fronts surrounded and destroyed the Vitebsk (5 divisions) and Bobruysk (6 divisions) enemy groupings, they completed the encirclement of 105,000 soldiers and officers to the east of Minsk and advanced 225-280 km to the west.

In the second stage (5 July-29 August) the troops of the fronts completed the defeat and complete elimination of the surrounded enemy grouping to the east of Minsk (5-11 July) and conducted the Shyaulyay, Vilnius, Kaunas, Belostok and Lyublin-Brest Operations. In developing a rapid advance to the west and northwest, the assault groupings covered another 260-400 km, having broadened the width of advance up to 1,100 km.

In the course of the operation, a total of 17 enemy divisions and 3 brigades were completely destroyed while 50 enemy divisions lost over half their personnel. In order to stabilize the front, the Nazi Command was forced to shift 46 divisions and 4 brigades into Belorussia.<sup>3</sup> This led to a weakening of the Wehrmacht forces on other sectors of the Soviet-German Front and to a worsening of the situation of the Nazi troops on the Western Front and in the occupied countries.

The Soviet troops had liberated Belorussia, a part of Lithuania and Latvia and the eastern regions of Poland. All of this created good conditions for a going over to the offensive by the Leningrad, Third and Second Baltic and First Ukrainian Fronts and the launching of new powerful attacks against enemy groupings fighting in the Baltic, East Prussia and Poland as well as for the development of offensive operations by the American-English troops in France.

The outstanding victory of the Soviet Army in Belorussia significantly worsened the military-political situation of Nazi Germany and further exacerbated the contradictions within the aggressive bloc. It caused a new moral and political upsurge among the Soviet people and encouraged further activities of the national liberation struggle in the European countries. The peoples of Europe with their own eyes were convinced that only the Soviet Union was that political, economic and military force which was capable of finally crushing fascism and liberating the enslaved countries of it.

*The successes of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Belorussian Operation were new proof of the increased level of Soviet military art and its indisputable superiority over the military art of the Nazi Army.*

The Soviet Command successfully solved the complex problem of ensuring operational-strategic surprise. For this purpose, Hq SHC [Headquarters, Supreme High Command] and the commands of the fronts and armies carried out a whole series of measures to mislead the enemy. In order to persuade the Wehrmacht leadership that in the summer of 1944 the Soviet troops would make the main thrust in the south, the Third Ukrainian Front, upon instructions of Hq SHC, carried out a spurious concentration of 8-9 rifle divisions reinforced with tanks and artillery to the north of Kishinev. For confusing the enemy, in the south and southwest they left the tank armies and certain long-range aviation formations which had previously operated there. On 29 May, Hq SHC sent to the fronts a special directive which emphasized the need to ensure the secrecy of the regroupings, the relieving of troops and other measures to prepare for the offensive. As a result of this, it was possible to conceal from the enemy the direction of the main thrust, the scale of the offensive and the time of its start. The making of powerful strikes by the Soviet troops where these were not expected was a complete surprise for the command of Army Group Center.

The Belorussian Operation was characterized by a bold choice of axes for the main thrusts. In determining to make the main thrust on the Minsk Warsaw Sector, Hq SHC proceeded from the fact that with the defeat of the enemy troop grouping in Belorussia, the stability of the enemy defenses would be disrupted, and its strategic troop groupings would be split.

The commanders of the fronts creatively approached the choice of the axes of the main thrust. Thus, the commander of the First Belorussian Front, Army Gen K. K. Rokossovskiy, in thoroughly considering the particular features of the grouping and defenses of the opposing enemy and the nature of the terrain, reached a decision to make two main thrusts from different sectors on the right wing of the front. One of these was to be made from Rogachev to Bobruysk, Osipovichi and the other from the area of the lower courses of the Berezina in the general direction of Slutsk. Although this bold decision ran contrary to the established views, it was justified by the situational conditions. It, in the opinion of K. K. Rokossovskiy, would solve a number of problems: "...The basic troop grouping on the right wing of the front would be committed to battle simultaneously and this could not be achieved on a single sector due to its comparative narrowness; the enemy lost real opportunities to maneuver; the success achieved even at first on one of these sectors would put the German troops in a difficult situation and would provide our front with an energetic development of the offensive."<sup>4</sup>

The principle of massing men and equipment on selected sectors of the thrusts underwent further development. In preparing for the operation, Hq SHC by maneuvering the reserves and regrouping troops from other sectors, was able to turn over to the First Baltic and three Belorussian fronts the headquarters of 4 all-arms armies, 2 tank armies, 52 rifle and cavalry divisions, 6 separate tank and mechanized corps, 33 air divisions, a large number of artillery formations and units and more than 210,000 men in a draft of reinforcements.<sup>5</sup>

The massing of men and equipment in the operations of the fronts was carried out in the aims of ensuring a strong initial thrust. For this in the armies, for example, narrow (up to 6-12 km) breakthrough sectors were designated and here the basic mass of available men and weapons was concentrated. As a rule, the tactical zone of enemy defenses was broken through on the adjacent flanks of two armies. The formations and in a number of instances also the field forces in the first echelon had a deeply echeloned configuration.

For ensuring superiority over the enemy and for increasing the force of the thrusts of the fronts in the course of the operation, Hq SHC skillfully used the strategic reserves. Thus, in mid-July when the troops of the First Baltic Front had reached the Neman and Svisloch Rivers, their rate of advance began to decline. For increasing the effort, Hq SHC made available to the front the 2d Guards and 51st Armies and this had a crucial impact on the course and outcome of the Shyaulyay Operation.

In the course of the Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation, the Soviet Army showed high skill in breaking through the previously prepared and deeply echeloned enemy defenses. The breakthrough of the defenses simultaneously in several sectors that were a significant distance apart ensured the breaking up of the enemy grouping into pieces and created good conditions for the surrounding and destruction of them one by one; this also made it difficult for the enemy to maneuver the reserves and employ them for making counterstrikes or taking up the defensive in some important sector.

The development of the tactical breakthrough into an operational one was carried out by the prompt committing of the mobile groups of the armies and fronts to the breakthrough, by the rapid broadening of the breakthrough toward the flanks and by the skillful pursuit of the retreating enemy troops. The mobile groups of the armies (individual tank corps) and fronts (tank armies and cavalry-mechanized groups [KMG]) for the first time during the war were committed to the battle (with the exception of the IX Tank Corps of the 3d Army (after breaking through the tactical defensive zone. This ensured the maintaining of their forces for carrying out the basic missions of developing the offensive at a rapid pace in the operational depth.

The Nazi groupings in the zones of the fronts were defeated by different methods. Depending upon the situational conditions, in certain instances the troops of the front made a deep devulsive thrust, with a portion of the forces developing an offensive toward one of the flanks and by enveloping the enemy grouping in cooperation with the adjacent front completed its defeat (the encirclement and destruction of the Vitebsk grouping by the First Baltic and Third Belorussian Fronts). Also widely employed was the method of attacking with the forces of one front on two converging axes (the encirclement and destruction of the

Bobruysk Grouping by the First Belorussian Front and the defeat of the Mogilev Grouping by the Second Belorussian Front and others). In a number of instances the front routed the opposing enemy by splitting it with several divisive thrusts (the Kaunas Operation of the Third Belorussian Front).

The Belorussian Strategic Operation was a system of front and army operations carried out simultaneously and successively along the front and in depth according to a single plan for achieving the overall strategic goal. Thus, the First Belorussian Front, after concluding the Bobruysk Operation, successively carried out the Minsk (29 June-4 July) and Lyublin-Brest (18 July-2 August) Operations, the Third Belorussian Front after the Vitebsk-Orsha Operation carried out the Minsk (29 June-4 July), Vilnius (5-20 July) and Kaunas Operations (28 July-28 August), and the First Baltic Front, after the Vitebsk-Orsha Operation, carried out the Polotsk (29 June-4 July) and Shyaualyay Operation (5-31 July). Here positive experience was gained by the command and staffs of the fronts in preparing the successive operations in the course of the preceding ones and conducting them without a break or after short operational pauses.

A characteristic trait of the Belorussian Operation was the skillful use by the Soviet troops of such a decisive method of action as encirclement. In the course of the offensive, the troops of the fronts surrounded and defeated major enemy groupings in the areas of Vitebsk, Bobruysk, Minsk, Vilnius and Brest. Here the encirclement of the Minsk enemy grouping was carried out in the process of the parallel and frontal pursuit of the enemy to a depth of around 250 km from the forward defensive edge. This was a new achievement for Soviet operational art.

In the course of the Minsk Operation, the troops of the Third Belorussian Front crossed the Berezina, on 2 July they occupied the population point of Vilyeyka and cut the Minsk--Vilnius Railroad (Diagram 1). Simultaneously, to the southwest of Minsk, the KMG of the First Belorussian Front captured the town of Stolbtsy thereby cutting off the Nazi escape route to Baranovichi, Brest. Formations of the 3d Army and the I Guards Tank Corps rapidly developed the offensive on the Minsk axis. In the morning of 3 July, the II Guards Tank Corps, in cooperation with troops from the 4th Guards Tank Army and the forward detachments of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies, on the heels of the retreating enemy columns broke into Minsk. By the end of the day the troops of the Third Belorussian Front along with the arriving formations of the I Guards Tank Corps and the 3d Army of the First Belorussian Front, had liberated the city of Nazis.<sup>6</sup>

The encirclement and destruction of the enemy were carried out as a single process which was combined with the rapid advance of the troops on the external perimeter. The strikes to split the enemy were made simultaneously with the encirclement at the very moment when the enemy was not putting up organized resistance in the encirclement area and this significantly accelerated its elimination. For destroying the surrounded grouping, men and equipment were assigned simultaneously and put together under a single command. This provided an opportunity for the main forces to carry out the basic mission of developing the offensive on the external perimeter.

The actions to eliminate the surrounded enemy in the area to the east of Minsk can be conditionally divided into three stages which are characterized by the

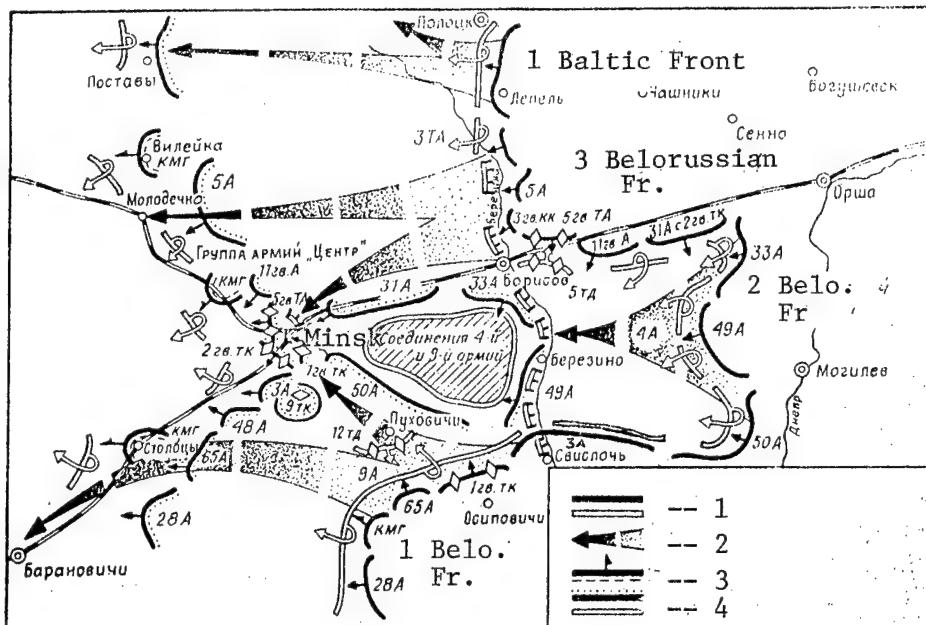


Diagram 1. Encirclement of Minsk Enemy Grouping

1--Position of sides by end of 28 June 44; 2--Directions of thrusts by Soviet troops according to plan of Hq SHC; 3--Position of KMG [cavalry-mechanized group] by end of 2 July 1944; 4--Position of sides by end of 3 July 1944.

use of different methods (Diagram 2). Thus, in the first stage (from 4 through 7 July) the enemy in an organized manner endeavored to break out of the encirclement to the west, having overall troop leadership and receiving materiel by air. During this period our troops made concentrated decisive attacks, they split the enemy grouping into several isolated parts and forced it to abandon the heavy military equipment and weapons. In the second stage (up to 9 July), individual Nazi detachments were still endeavoring to put up organized resistance, advancing along forest roads and paths and endeavoring to escape from encirclement. The Soviet troops destroyed these isolated groups by intercepting them on advantageous lines and destroying them with fire and attack by the main forces of divisions and regiments. In the third stage (9-11 July), the scattered small enemy groups, now chaotically and without organized resistance, endeavored to break out of the snare to the west. The actions of the Soviet troops had the nature of "combing" the forests and fields and capturing small enemy groups using the forces of small composite detachments (a rifle company--battalion reinforced by a tank platoon, a battery of antitank cannons and a mortar company) mounted on motor vehicles.

In carrying out the missions of encircling and destroying the enemy, an exceptionally important role was played by maneuvering the formations and field forces of mobile troops. The tank armies and tank corps, in operating skillfully, came out on the enemy's route of retreat in the areas of Bobruysk and to the east of Minsk and with the approach of the all-arms armies continued to develop the offensive in depth.

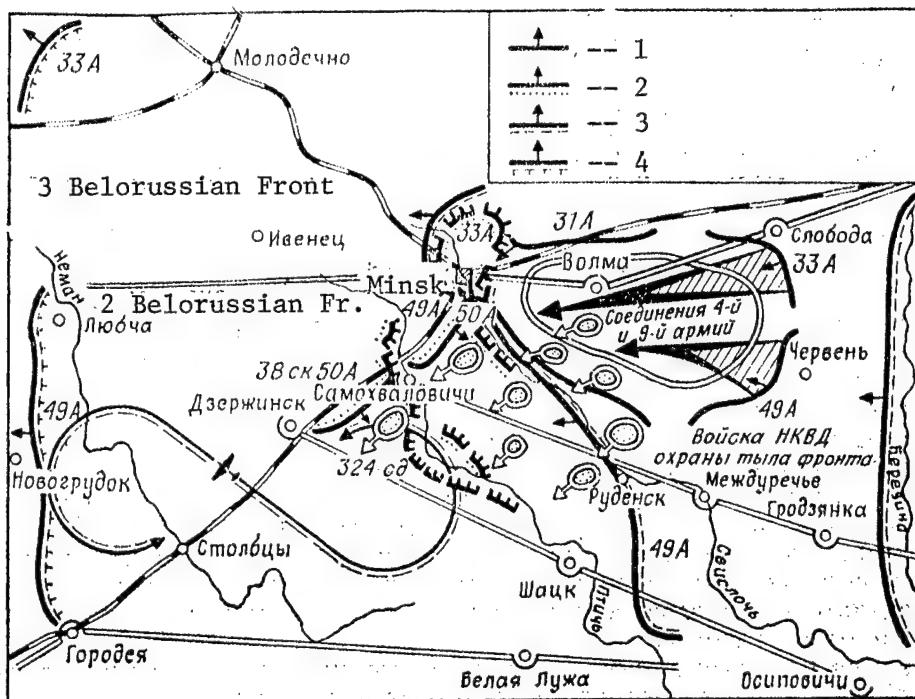


Diagram 2. Destruction of the Minsk Grouping of Nazi Troops

1--Actions of Soviet troops from 4 through 6 July; 2-From 7 through 9 July; 3--From 10 through 11 July; 4--Position of Soviet troops by 13 July 1944.

The Soviet troops showed high art in the rapid frontal and parallel pursuit of the enemy and this was carried out on a broad front, at a rapid pace and to a great depth. The commanders of the fronts and armies widely utilized mobile formations for reaching the escape routes of the enemy troops and this deprived the Nazi Command of the possibility of taking up the defensive ahead of time on previously prepared and advantageous lines in its operational depth.

Experience showed that the most effective method of pursuing the retreating enemy in the aim of encircling it in the operational depth was parallel pursuit combined with pursuit from the front. Narrower zones of pursuit were assigned to the rifle corps operating closer to the surrounding enemy grouping. Thus, while in the 5th Army of the Third Belorussian Front their width reached 22-27 km, and in the 11th Guards Army, 12-20 km, in the 31st Army which had set up the internal perimeter of encirclement, the zones of pursuit for the corps were 9-12 km. A rifle corps from the second echelon of this army advanced on the flank adjacent to the encirclement area and this combined with the rapid advance of the first echelon troops facilitated the establishing of the internal perimeter of encirclement.

In the rapid pursuit of the enemy an important role was played by the forward detachments which were basically comprised of rifle battalions mounted on motor vehicles and reinforced with tanks, SAU, artillery, combat engineers and scouts.

The divisional deputy commanders more often directed the actions of the forward detachments. The forward detachments, in operating 20-30 km away from the main forces, boldly seized road junctions, population points, bridgeheads on water obstacles, they destroyed supply trains, and attacked retreating enemy columns, forcing them to deploy the main forces and accept battle in disadvantageous conditions. Thus, in the zone of the 31st Army, in approaching the Berezina, the forward detachments during the night of 1 July reached the river, crossed it without a halt, preventing the enemy from organizing defenses on its western bank. Benefiting from the success of the forward detachments, the main army forces in a short period of time crossed the river and continued the advance.<sup>7</sup>

The vanguards of the rifle divisions consisting of a reinforced rifle battalion up to a rifle regiment usually operated 4-6 km ahead of the main forces. This made it possible for the main forces of the divisions to carry out pursuit in column formations and deploy only with stubborn enemy resistance.

One of the components for the success of the operation was well organized cooperation. Hq SHC successfully solved the problem of strategic cooperation between the fronts, long-range aviation and the partisans participating in the Belorussian Operation and also coordinated their actions with groupings conducting operations on other strategic sectors. During the first stage of the operation, the clear coordination of efforts by the four fronts ensured the virtually simultaneous breaking through of the enemy defenses in all six areas and the defeat of four Nazi troop groupings (Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruysk), in the operational-tactical depth. In the Minsk Operation, well-organized cooperation among the three fronts, the long-range aviation and partisans made it possible in a short period of time to encircle and destroy the main forces of Army Group Center.

In the fronts, during the entire operation, close cooperation was maintained between the all-arms formations and aviation. For example, a major role was played by aviation in destroying the Bobruysk and Minsk surrounded groupings. Thus, in the aim of accelerating the defeat of the Bobruysk enemy grouping and thwarting its attempt to break out of the encirclement, over 500 aircraft for 1½ hours made a massed strike. The Nazis suffered enormous losses in personnel and combat equipment. Having abandoned all tanks and assault guns, around 500 guns and over 1,000 motor vehicles, they attempted to break through to Bobruysk, but were essentially destroyed by attacks from the formations of the 65th and 48th Armies.

Long-range aviation provided active aid in attacking major objectives of the enemy defenses and its operational rear. From May through September 1944, the long-range aviation in the interests of the troops of the First Baltic, Second, Third and First Belorussian Fronts made 16,065 aircraft sorties and dropped 16,908 tons of bombs on the enemy.<sup>8</sup>

The maintaining of close cooperation with the formations of the Northern and Southern Air Defense Fronts was of great importance for ensuring the successful carrying out of the missions by the ground forces. During the period of preparing for the operation and in the course of combat they securely covered the lines of communications of the fronts to a depth of 150-200 km.

We should also note the organization of cooperation between the advancing troops of the fronts and the major partisan forces. In operating in the enemy rear, the partisans captured advantageous lines and crossings on rivers, they disrupted the enemy lines of communications, they caused it tangible losses and supported the advancing troops in liberating the cities while providing valuable intelligence data for the Soviet Command. In the course of pursuing the enemy forces, the partisans often performed the role of guides in the subunits of our troops operating under the difficult conditions of the forested swampy terrain.

In the Belorussian Operation, the art of employing tank and mechanized troops, artillery, engineer and signal troops continued to be improved.

*Firm and continuous troop command and control* was an important factor in successfully carrying out the combat missions. The presence of a large number of mobile formations and the rapid rate of pursuit necessitated mobility for the command and control system. This was achieved by a series of measures adopted additionally by the commanders of the fronts and armies. Thus, prior to the start of the operation in the Third Belorussian Front, 15 officers from the reserve were assigned as liaison officers to the operations headquarters of the front staff. This group had available to it PO-2 aircraft. Responsible representatives of the front command with a group of officers (two or three radio operators, a scout, a member of the tank troops and a cipher clerk) were assigned to the mobile formations with a radio ensuring direct contact with the staff of the front.<sup>9</sup> The command points and communications junctions were provided with the necessary amount of motor transport. This made them mobile and made it possible to move quickly and deploy in the course of the offensive.

Well organized party political work played an important role in achieving the defeat of the enemy and in the manifesting of high offensive zeal by the troops and mass heroism of the personnel. Its main content was to explain to the troops their duty in liberating Belorussia and the concrete missions of each of them in the forthcoming operation and indoctrination in a spirit of fraternal friendship of the Soviet peoples, the glorious military traditions of the Soviet Armed Forces and hate for the enemy. Due to the fact that during the operation the Soviet troops would be fighting on Polish territory, in the party political work great attention was given for explaining to the personnel the great liberating mission of the Soviet Army.

In the Belorussian Operation, the Soviet military showed increased combat skill and mass heroism. Just during July-August 1944, over 402,000 soldiers and officers received orders and medals. The most distinguished men were awarded the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union. For courage shown in the course of the operation 662 formations and units received honorary names, including 25 corps, 94 divisions, 79 brigades and fortified areas and 464 separate units.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Vol 1, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1976, p 431.

<sup>2</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Vol 9, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1978, pp 42-47.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p 64.

<sup>4</sup> K. K. Rokossovskiy, "Soldatskiy dolg" [A Soldier's Duty], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1968, p 260.

<sup>5</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...," Vol 9, p 44.

<sup>6</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 241, inv. 296485, file 3, sheets 10, 74-75; inv. 12942, file 8, sheet 461.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., folio 241, inv. 13834, file 78, sheets 223, 240.

<sup>8</sup> VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 6, 1964, p 6.

<sup>9</sup> TsAMO, folio 241, inv. 265478, file 8, sheets 19-20.

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## USE OF ARMORED, MECHANIZED TROOPS IN BELORUSSIAN OPERATION DESCRIBED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 19-24

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Professor, Mar Armored Trps O. Losik\*: "The Use of the Armored and Mechanized Troops in the Belorussian Operation"]

[Text] By the start of the Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation, the fronts involved in it had been additionally reinforced with a significant number of units and formations of the armored and mechanized troops. Thus, the I Tank Corps was turned over to the First Baltic Front from the reserves of Hq SHC, while the Third Belorussian Front received the II Guards Tank and III Guards Mechanized Corps. The 5th Guards Tank Army was also regrouped into the zone of the Third Belorussian Front from the Second Ukrainian Front. The right wing of the First Belorussian Front was strengthened with the I Guards, IX Tank and I Mechanized Corps. Arriving on the left wing of the front were: from the Second Ukrainian Front, the 2d Tank Army and from the Sq SHC reserve the XI Tank Corps. In addition to the designated tank armies, tank and mechanized corps, the fronts were reinforced with a large number of separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigades and regiments.

As a whole, by the start of the Bagration Operation, the Supreme High Command had succeeded in establishing almost a 6-fold superiority in tanks and SAU and this was an important prerequisite for successfully conducting the offensive at a rapid pace and to a great depth. In no other previous operation did the Soviet troops have such a quantity of combat vehicles. This was proof of the increased capabilities of the USSR Armed Forces and the high art of the Soviet Command.

It must be pointed out that in the first half of 1944, a number of organizational measures had been carried out in the armored and mechanized troops of the Soviet Army. Thus, in February 1944, they began organizing self-propelled artillery brigades and reorganizing the self-propelled artillery regiments.

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\* During the described period, Col O. A. Losik commanded the 4th Guards Tank Brigade of the II Guards Tatsinskiy Tank Corps. For courage and heroism shown in the course of the Belorussian Operation, he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

In May 1944, separate self-propelled artillery battalions began to be organized and a month later were already being sent to man up the guards rifle divisions. In February 1944, light tanks were excluded from the tank regiments of the mechanized corps.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the plan of the Belorussian Operation had been worked out, in the Soviet Armed Forces firm views had come into being on the methods of the combat employment of the armored and mechanized troops and these had been elaborated on a basis of a creative study of the 3-year experience of waging the war.

Planning for the combat employment of the tank and mechanized troops in the Belorussian Operation was basically determined by the operation's plan. Thus, in the aim of rapidly breaking through the enemy's defensive tactical zone, according to the plans of the commanders of the fronts and armies, the separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigades, regiments and battalions, as a rule, were to be used for close infantry support and subsequently for operating as forward detachments. Here from 40 to 60 percent of the tank and SAU were assigned in each front for close support and this made it possible in the breakthrough areas to establish densities of 12-20 units per kilometer of front.<sup>2</sup> The increased densities of the close support tanks, in comparison with 1943, made it possible to strengthen the power of the initial thrust and, consequently, increase the rate of breaking through the enemy defenses.

The tank armies and mechanized corps (the latter were included in the cavalry-mechanized groups [KMG] were to be used, respectively, as mobile groups of the fronts or as part of these groups. The First Baltic Front was an exception here. The I Tank Corps of Lt Gen Tank Trps V. V. Butkov was assigned here for operating as the mobile group of the front. In the Third Belorussian Front, two mobile groups were organized: the 5th Guards Tank Army under the command of Mar Armored Trps P. A. Rotmistrov and a KMG (III Guards Cavalry and III Guards Mechanized Corps) which was under the command of Lt Gen N. S. Oslikovskiy. On the First Belorussian Front, two mobile groups were also established. One of them was the 2d Tank Army (commander, Col Gen Tank Trps S. I. Bogdanov) and the second a KMG (IV Guards Cavalry and I Mechanized Corps) under the command of Lt Gen I. A. Pliyev. In the Second Belorussian Front which did not include tank armies and corps, the mobile group included two tank brigades, a rifle division and a self-propelled artillery regiment.

The separate tank corps (with the exception of the I Tank Corps on the First Baltic Front) were to be employed as mobile groups in the all-arms armies advancing in the sectors of the main thrusts of the fronts. Thus, the II Guards Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen Tank Trps A. S. Burdeynyy) comprised the mobile group of the 11th Guards Army, the IX Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen Tank Trps B. S. Bakharov) did the same in the 3d Army, the I Guards Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen Tank Trps M. F. Panov), in the 65th Army, and the XI Tank Corps (commander, Maj Gen Tank Trps F. N. Rudkin, from 15 July 1944, Maj Gen Tank Trps I. I. Yushchuk) for the 8th Guards Army.

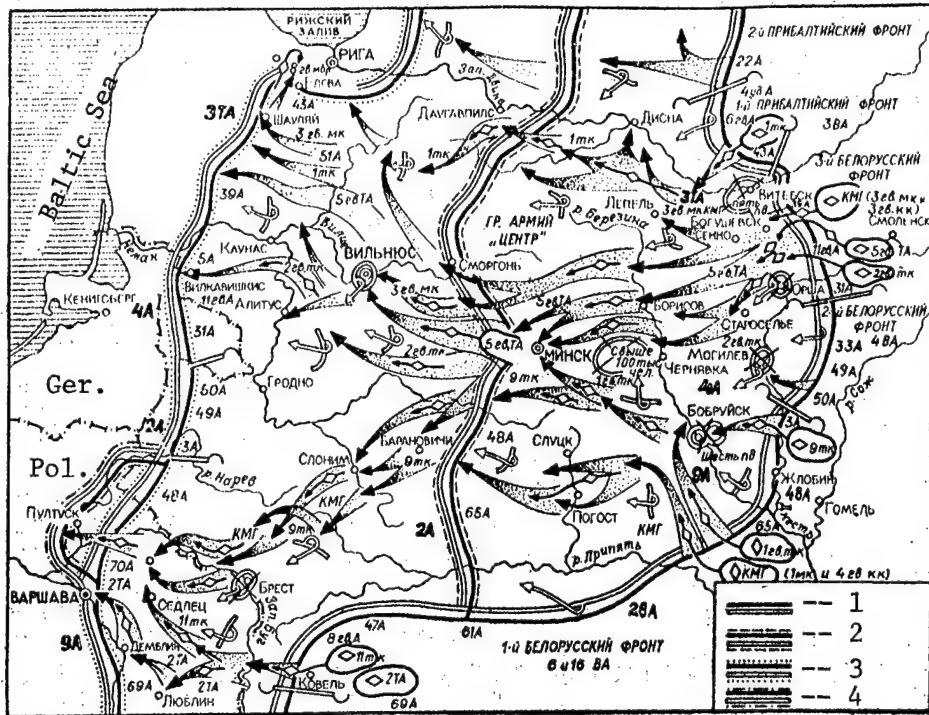
A characteristic feature of the employment of the mobile troops in the Belorussian Operation was the fact that the separate tank corps, in being the mobile groups of the armies, were to be used for completing the breakthrough of the tactical defensive zone and supporting the commitment of the mobile groups of

the fronts, that is, the tank armies and KMG, to the breakthrough. Here they planned the successive commitment of the mobile groups to battle. For example, the II Guards Tank Corps, the mobile group of the 11th Guards Army, was to be committed to battle on the first day of the operation while on the fourth day in the same sector the 5th Guards Tank Army, the mobile group of the front, was to be committed.

In preparing for the operation, particularly intense work was carried out in the armored and mechanized troops which had arrived from the reserve of Hq SHC or had been regrouped from other fronts and had a very limited time to organize combat. Due to the fact that in the course of the operations, the tank units and formations operate on wooded-swampy terrain and cross numerous water obstacles, great attention was given to working through the questions of troop operations under these conditions. With the commanders and staffs of all levels, from the tank army down to the regiment inclusively, the regions and sectors of combat were studied and the routes up to the forward edge were reconnoitered. Special exercises were organized for all the driver personnel of the tanks and SAU in driving the vehicles across swamps, rivers and forested areas. Measures were carried out to increase the cross-country capability of the tanks, SAU and motor vehicles. Beams for self-recovery were made for all the vehicles as fascines for crossing swamps. The subunit commanders were taught to find their way in wooded-swampy terrain and advance in the designated direction under nighttime conditions. With each tank subunit and unit, exercises were conducted on subjects corresponding to their pending use.

The combat operations of the armored and mechanized troops of the fronts were marked by exceptional dynamicness and maneuverability. In benefitting from the results of the heavy air and artillery strikes, the rifle formations and units together with the tank and self-propelled artillery brigades and regiments assigned for close support began to break through the enemy's tactical defensive zone. This was carried out most successfully on the axes of the main thrusts of the First Baltic Front and the northern assault grouping of the Third Belorussian Front. The rifle troops, in close cooperation with the close support tanks and with air and artillery support, during the first day of the operation broke through the enemy defenses to a depth of 10-16 km, having created good conditions for committing the echelons for exploiting the success to battle. The southern group of the Third Belorussian Front which began its offensive along the Moscow--Minsk Highway immediately encountered stubborn enemy resistance and during the first 2 days was unable to break through even the main enemy defensive zone. This circumstance, as further events were to show, substantially influenced the employment of the 5th Guards Tank Army and II Guards Tank Corps.

The troops from the northern grouping on the right wing of the First Belorussian Front (3d and 48th Armies), in going over to the offensive on 24 June, from the very outset encountered stubborn enemy resistance and by mid-day had broken through only the first position of the main defensive zone. Under these conditions, it was decided to commit two tank brigades from the IX Tank Corps to battle. The main zone of enemy defenses was successfully crossed. This made it possible subsequently, after breaking through the second zone by the rifle troops, to commit the IX Tank Corps at full strength to the battle.



**Operations of Armored and Mechanized Troops  
in the Belorussian Operation**

**Key:** 1--Position by 23 June 1944; 2--By 4 July 1944; 3--By 29 August 1944; 4--By 19 September 1944.

A particular feature in the operations of the tank brigades and regiments in breaking through the enemy defenses was the fact that in those sectors of advance, where the forward edge of enemy defenses ran along the opposite banks of rivers, the close support tanks were committed to battle after these water obstacles had been crossed by the rifle troops and bridgeheads seized. For example, this was the case on the axis of the main thrust of the 49th Army of the Second Belorussian Front and the 3d Army of the First Belorussian Front.

A very crucial and difficult stage was the committing to battle of the mobile groups of the armies and fronts and this was marked by a number of essential features determined by the overall plan of the operation, by the nature of the enemy defenses and by the terrain conditions. Depending upon the developing situation, the committing to battle of the follow-up echelon was carried out on different axes differently and frequently quite different from what was envisaged in the plans of the army and front operations. As an illustration of this, let us give several examples. Thus, the 5th Guards Tank Army was committed to battle according to the first variation, that is, on the Borisov axis, but this was unsuccessful as the enemy put up stubborn resistance to the troops of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies. The field force was regrouped to the left wing of the front and committed to battle in the Bogushev sector, where a KMG had been committed 2 days previously. Having caught up with the rifle formations at a depth of 30 km from the previous forward edge, the tank army began to rapidly pursue the enemy and came out on the sector previously planned for it.

The II Guards Tank Corps, the follow-up echelon of the 11th Guards Army, was also committed to battle in an unique manner. For the same reason as the 5th Guards Tank Army, the corps was not committed to battle as planned. The necessary conditions for committing it arose only on the fourth day of the operation. Here in the zone of the army the corps was regrouped to its right flank and committed at a depth of 20 km. With commitment to battle, it developed a rapid offensive on the general Staroselye axis.

Significant difficulties also arose in committing the IX Tank Corps. Due to the destruction of one of the crossings over the Drut River and the insufficient fire damage to the enemy defenses, the attempts to commit the formation to battle on the first day of the operation were unsuccessful and caused significant losses. For this reason it was committed brigade-by-brigade only on the second day of the operation along a single road.

In our view, particular attention should be given to the committing to battle of the 2d Tank Army in the Kovel-Lyublin sector. In determining the line and time for committing it, the commander and the staff of the front skillfully considered all the conditions of the combat situation and the task set. The field force was committed to battle at a depth of 70 km from the former forward edge in the same sector where the XI Tank Corps had been committed 3 days previously, that is, from the bridgehead seized on the Western Bug River. Such an engagement had a very favorable effect upon the subsequent army operations. It was able to develop a rapid push toward Lyublin.

The success of committing the follow-up echelons to the engagement depended largely upon the artillery, air and engineer support. For this purpose the fronts used 3-5 cannon and heavy howitzer artillery brigades and up to 2 combat engineer brigades as well as from 2 to 4 air corps.

An analysis of the conditions and methods of committing the follow-up echelons of the armies and fronts to battle during the Belorussian Operation makes it possible to conclude that the experience gained was a major step in developing the theory and practice of the combat employment of armored and mechanized troops during the war years. For the first time the follow-up echelons of the fronts and even the armies were committed to battle, as a rule, after the enemy defenses had been broken through to their entire tactical depth and some after the defeat of the near operational enemy reserves (the I Tank Corps, the 5th Guards Tank Army and 2d Tank Army). As a result, the mobile formations and field forces did not participate in completing the breakthrough of the enemy defenses and, consequently, did not suffer losses, they reached the operational depth at full combat strength and developed the offensive at a rapid pace. A completely new feature in the employment of the mobile formations and field forces for exploiting the success was the successive committing to battle on the same sector of initially the mobile groups of the armies and then the front-level mobile groups.

With commitment to battle, the tank armies, the tank and mechanized corps, in operating deep in the enemy defenses, as in the previous operations, carried out different combat missions. However, most frequently they participated in surrounding large enemy groupings. It must be said that the Belorussian Operation enriched Soviet military art with new forms and methods for the operation

of tank troops in the surrounding of enemy groupings. If the basic enemy forces were chiefly in the tactical defensive zone, as was the case, for example, in the Vitebsk area, they were surrounded by the army rifle formations together with the tank brigades and close support regiments. The large tank formations did not participate in the encirclement of this grouping. The enemy was encircled under completely different conditions in the Bobruysk area. Here the depth of the enemy grouping's positions, in comparison with the Vitebsk, was significantly greater and the city itself was around 70 km from the forward edge of the enemy defenses. For this reason for encircling the enemy at such a depth and in a short period of time, the IX and I Guards Tank Corps were employed and these were, respectively, the follow-up echelons of the 3d and 65th Armies. The designated formations, having completed the breakthrough of the enemy's tactical defense zone together with the rifle troops, under difficult conditions of wooded-swampy terrain developed the offensive in depth and on the fourth day of the operation linked up in the area of Bobruysk.

In contrast to the encirclement of the enemy groupings in the regions of Stalingrad and Korsun-Shevchenkovskiy, in the Belorussian Operation, the troops which fought on the external perimeter did not establish a stable combat front but rather rapidly developed the offensive in depth. This deprived the enemy of the possibility of organizing and maintaining cooperation between the surrounded troops and the troops fighting on the external perimeter and led to the rapid elimination of the surrounded groupings.

After the defeat of the large Nazi grouping surrounded to the east of Minsk, an enormous breach was formed in the enemy's strategic front. The Soviet troops were able to rapidly advance toward the USSR Western Frontier. Under these conditions the organizing of decisive and continuous pursuit of the retreating enemy was of particular importance. In carrying out this mission a particular feature in the combat operations of the formations and field forces of the armored and mechanized troops was that they pursued enemy chiefly along routes running parallel to the movement of the enemy troops while the rifle troops, as a rule, pinned them down from the front. As a result, the formations of the tank armies and the separate tank and mechanized corps, in advancing at an average daily rate of 25-30 km, overtook the retreating enemy units, reached the deep rear of the enemy troops and cut off their route of retreat.

The combat operations of the armored and mechanized troops in the operational depth were marked by exceptional dynamicness and maneuverability. They were carried out in a broad area continuously at night and at day and often had the nature of a raid.

During the Belorussian Operation, the Soviet tank troops, like the men of all branches of troops, showed mass heroism, courage and valor. Over 50,000 of the tank troops and SAU troops received orders and medals while 100 of the most outstanding troops received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. For outstanding combat operations, many formations and units received combat orders and honorary names such as Minsk, Bobruysk, Mogilev and so forth.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Stroitel'stvo i boyevoye primeneniye sovetskikh tankovykh voysk v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [The Organizational Development and Combat Employment of the Soviet Tank Troops During the Years of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1979, pp 62, 68.

<sup>2</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1978, Vol 9, p 44.

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## COMBAT EMPLOYMENT OF ARTILLERY IN BELORUSSIAN OPERATION VIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 25-33

[Article by Col Gen Art V. Mikhalkin, commander of the rocket troops and artillery of the Ground Forces: "The Combat Employment of Artillery in the Belorussian Operation"]

[Text] Due to the constant concern of the CPSU and the Soviet government for the quantitative and qualitative growth and improvement in the organizational structure of the troops, the combat might of Soviet artillery by the start of the Belorussian Operation had significantly grown. This made it possible for the artillery units and formations, in close cooperation with the other branches of troops and aviation, to successfully carry out the tasks of fire damage to the enemy both in breaking through the deeply echeloned and engineer-prepared defenses as well as exploiting the success in the operational depth.

In the course of preparing for the operation, the troops of the First Baltic, Third, Second and First Belorussian Fronts, due to the wide-scale maneuvering of the artillery, had received a significant amount of RVGK [Reserve of the Supreme High Command] units and formations, including, 13 artillery divisions and rocket artillery divisions and more than 20 antiaircraft artillery divisions. The command and staffs were confronted with the responsible task of covertly concentrating a large amount of artillery which had arrived by rail from the RVGK. In order to conceive of the scope of this work, we might merely say that just on the Belorussian Front more than 67 operational trains arrived with artillery (up to 40 regiments) and 69 artillery regiments were regrouped within the front. On the First Baltic Front, in addition to the TOE artillery of the rifle divisions, involved in the breakthrough were 85 artillery units and formations. In comparison with the previous offensive operations, artillery regroupings within the field forces and formations had significantly increased. Just in the 43d Army of the First Baltic Front, more than 150 batteries were shifted to a breakthrough section 7 km wide. It must be pointed out that due to the precise control and continuous supervision, the concentration of artillery was basically carried out covertly and in a short period of time (within 8-10 days).<sup>1</sup>

The forested-swampy terrain significantly impeded the moving up of the artillery to the position areas and its deployment. However, the previously carried out measures made it possible to successfully carry out this mission. The artillery

staffs of all levels during the preparatory period had reconnoitered and established the firing positions and observation posts for the newly arriving artillery and topographical surveying and engineer organization had been carried out for a majority of them.<sup>2</sup>

The decisive massing of artillery on the major sectors can be seen from the following facts. In the breakthrough areas of the fronts (armies) which were 11-20 percent in relation to the total width of the zone of advance, some 80-90 percent of the artillery existing on the front (in the army) had been concentrated. This made it possible in the breakthrough areas of the fronts to have an average artillery density of 150-200 and more guns and mortars per kilometer of front.<sup>3</sup> The tactical density, for example, in the 37th Guards Rifle Division of the XVIII Rifle Corps of the 65th Army was 235 guns, mortars and rocket artillery combat vehicles.<sup>4</sup> The high artillery densities increased the possibility of simultaneously neutralizing the major defensive objectives, they increased the fire density and ensured the winning of fire supremacy over the enemy artillery.

In the preparation of the Belorussian Operation there was a creative process of establishing *more advanced artillery groupings* in the armies, corps, divisions and regiments. In all armies fighting on the major sectors there were powerful long-range (DD) artillery groups designed primarily for countering enemy artillery. For example, the DD group of the 6th Guards Army of the First Belorussian Front consisted of four cannon artillery brigades, while the 5th Army of the Third Belorussian Front had a cannon artillery division and two cannon artillery brigades.<sup>5</sup>

In 8 armies out of the 11 (with the exception of the 6th Guards, 31st and 28th) which broke through the defenses, rocket artillery groups (GMCh) were established. In certain armies destruction groups (3d, 5th, 28th, 49th, and 65th) and breakthrough groups (5th and 28th) were organized. Artillery groups were also established in the corps, divisions and regiments. And although they still had the old names ("long-range," "infantry support" and so forth), in terms of the nature of the tasks to be carried out, their strength and methods of command and control they in many ways were close to the groups subsequently set up along organizational-tactical lines. Such an artillery grouping made it possible to assign more artillery directly to the commanders of the rifle units and formations, to more effectively mass fire on the breakthrough areas and ensure better conditions for controlling the artillery in the course of combat operations.

The planning of the artillery offensive was carried out on the basis of the instructions of the artillery staffs of the fronts considering the data of all types of reconnaissance. But here they did not exclude the individual features of the artillery offensive schedule in the armies and formations. The artillery staffs of the field forces worked out an artillery offensive schedule for the first day of the operation (combat) giving the consumption of ammunition by periods, a plan and schedule for ranging, an operational order (fragmentary order) indicating the reinforcements to be assigned. The targets and areas of enemy installations to be neutralized were planned directly by the executors with the subsequent approval of the fire plan by the senior artillery chief. This ensured the most effective use of the artillery in the armies, corps and divisions.<sup>6</sup>

		1 Артиллерийская подготовка (в мин)	Артиллерийская поддержка атаки
		10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170	м
1 Прибалтийский фронт а 23.6.1944г.		Артподготовка 2 часа 15 минут	Огневой вал и ПСО
3 Белорусский фронт 23.6.1944г. б		60 сч 15 сч Артподготовка 2 часа 20 минут 528 сч Разрушение Подавление Перенос огня частью артиллерией на 1 рядок вб	Огневой вал о
2 Белорусский фронт с 23.6.1944г.		Артподготовка 2 часа	Огневой вал о
h 1 Белорусский фронт	3 и д 48 армии 24.6.1944г.	Артподготовка 2 часа 05 минут DH Разрушение и подавление DH Тех. режима	Огневой вал о
	65 е армия 24.6.1944г.	Артподготовка 2 часа DH Разрушение DH Разрушение DH Разрушение DH	Двойной Рогневой вал и ПСО
8 гв. армия 18.7.1944г. f Обеспечение боя РБ г.		Артподготовка 1 час 40 минут (планируемая) DH Разрушение DH	Двойной огневой вал (по плану) бой РБ перерос в общее г наступление

Schedule for the First and Second Periods of the Artillery Offensive in the Belorussian Operation

Key: a--First Baltic Front; b--Third Belorussian Front; c--Second Belorussian Front; d--3d and 48th Armies; e--65th Army; f--8th Guards Army; g--Support for combat of reconnaissance in force; h--First Belorussian Front; i--Artillery softening up (in hours and minutes); j--Destruction; k--Shifting of fire by portion of artillery to first defensive line; l--Neutralization and destruction; m--Artillery support for attack; n--Rolling barrage and successive fire concentration; o--Rolling barrage; p--Double rolling barrage and successive fire concentration; q--Double rolling barrage (according to plan); r--Reconnaissance in force develops into general offensive.

OH--Intense shellfire; ОПН--Successive intense shellfire.

The duration of the artillery softening up for the attack, according to the plans of the fronts, varied and was 2 hours--2 hours 5 minutes on the First and Second Belorussian Fronts, 2 hours 15 minutes on the First Baltic and 2 hours 20 minutes on the Third Belorussian Front. Here a significant percentage of the time (up to 90 minutes) was assigned to the destruction period. This was explained by the fact that in preparing its defenses the enemy had established a large number of heavily fortified defensive works.

The artillery softening up (with the exception of the First Baltic Front) was planned to start with heavy intense shellfire by all the artillery lasting 5-15 minutes to a depth of up to 6 km and at the end of this there would be a neutralization period representing the alternating of powerful intense shellfire with deliberate fire to a depth to 2 km and sometimes to 6 km. The organizing of this period varied. Thus, on the Third Belorussian Front, at the end of it the fire was to be shifted by a portion of the artillery to the forward edge of the rolling barrage in the aim of eliminating the gap between the end of the artillery softening up and the start of the support for the attack. The remaining portion of the artillery shifted its fire in small increments until it lined up with the first line of the rolling barrage. On the First Belorussian Front in the subsequent intense shellfire the artillery for 20 minutes was to fire at an increasing rate until the maximum technical limit of the guns. During the first 5 minutes this was 25 percent, in the second 50 percent, in the third 75 percent and in the last 5 minutes 100 percent. In terms of its power and nature, the last intense shellfire differed little from a rolling barrage. This actually achieved the surprise of the attack all the more as after the end of the artillery softening up the artillery began firing at targets that were more than 300 m away from the forward edge of the enemy defenses.

The artillery support for the attack by the infantry and tanks was planned on the fronts depending upon the observation conditions and the designated rate of breaking through the first position of the enemy defenses. On the First Baltic Front they planned to provide artillery support for the attack with a single rolling barrage for 30 minutes until our infantry had captured the first and second enemy trenches and then for a half hour, by the method of successive fire concentration (PSO). In the Third Belorussian Front, support for the attack was to be carried out by a single rolling barrage combined with a PSO for 60 minutes to a depth of 1.5-2 km.<sup>7</sup> On the First Belorussian Front in the zone of the 28th and 65th Armies as well as on certain sectors of the Second Belorussian Front, for the first time during the war years on an operational scale, a double rolling barrage was planned to a depth of 1.5-2 km. The new method of artillery support was caused by the needs for more dependable artillery support for the infantry and tank attack in breaking through a strong Nazi positional defense as well as by the increased capabilities of the Soviet artillery.<sup>8</sup>

In planning the artillery accompaniment for the infantry and tanks in fighting deep in the Nazi defenses, they planned to conduct concentrated fire (at group targets), to make long-range fire attacks as well as set up barrage fire for repelling enemy counterattacks. The plan envisaged the use of at least two-thirds of all the artillery for carrying out these missions. Moreover it was also proposed that a portion of the artillery from the army breakthrough groups (in breaking them up), the corps and battalion artillery groups be turned over to the commanders of the rifle battalions, regiments, divisions and corps.<sup>9</sup>

Great attention was given to organizing fire damage to enemy objectives with artillery support for committing the mobile formations to the breach. The plans gave specific artillery weapons to be used for carrying out this mission, the time and methods of their employment.

By the start of the operation, the artillery had been sufficiently supplied with ammunition (from 2.5 to 4 units of fire). The planned consumption of ammunition for the first day of the operation had been set in the following amounts: 1 unit of fire for the softening up, 0.5 for the artillery support for the infantry and tank attack and up to 1 unit of fire for the artillery accompaniment of the infantry and tanks in depth. In certain armies they also permitted deviations from these standards.<sup>10</sup>

The artillery staffs gave great importance to checking a possible enemy counter-preparation fire. Thus, for example, the instructions from the artillery commander of the First Belorussian Front on the employment of artillery in the operation stated: "...In the aims of checking our advance, prior to the start of the artillery softening up for the attack, the enemy can carry out counter-preparation fire by all artillery weapons. In this instance, the artillery commanders with the approval of the army military councils, will make a powerful intense shelling of the enemy artillery batteries as planned prior to the start of the artillery softening up for the attack...."<sup>11</sup>

In preparing for the operation, planned practical exercises in the field were conducted regularly for the artillery units and subunits. For example, in the 65th Army of the First Belorussian Front, from 29 May through 2 June 1944, all the formations held two-sided field exercises for the rifle troops involving the artillery subunits. Exercises with field firing played a major role and here they worked out the techniques for accompanying the infantry with a rolling barrage.

In order to better organize cooperation between the branches of troops, in the rifle corps and divisions exercises were conducted for all levels of commanders using sandboxes and here they reproduced the terrain of the forthcoming operations, the enemy defenses and the battle formations of our units. The exercises detailed and concretized the actions of the branches of troops during various periods of the offensive and the methods of crossing the enemy defenses and repelling counterattacks were worked through.<sup>12</sup>

For achieving close cooperation in the course of combat, the commanders of the artillery units and subunits planned for the locating of their command and observation points either together with the command and observation points of the all-arms commanders or near to them. Observers equipped with radios were sent out to the infantry battle formations. In organizing cooperation with the armored and mechanized troops, fire plans were approved to support the committing of the mobile groups to the breakthrough and general markers and signals were established for calling in and ceasing fire. Artillery observers were also located on special tanks for fire correction.

Cooperation of the artillery with aviation was organized on an army scale. The army staffs together with the aviation ones clarified the procedure (sequence) for carrying out the set missions. The artillery, as a rule, received missions to destroy and neutralize the enemy within the main zone while the aviation did this in the tactical defensive zone. For supporting air force operations in certain armies artillery groups were organized for neutralizing the enemy anti-aircraft artillery.

In the course of preparing for the Belorussian Operation, the questions of the combat employment of the artillery were also given great attention by the commanders of the fronts and the representatives of Hq SHC. For example, Mar SU G. K. Zhukov and the commander of the Second Belorussian Front, Col Gen G. F. Zakharov, together with Mar Art N. D. Yakovlev and Col Gen S. M. Shtemenko on 9 June 1944 traveled to the 49th Army (commander, Lt Gen I. T. Grishin) of this front where, along with resolving a number of other questions, they finally formulated the goals of the artillery offensive and issued instructions for its planning.<sup>13</sup> On 6 June 1944, during a trip to the 5th Army (commander, Lt Gen K. I. Krylov) of the Third Belorussian Front, Mar SU A. M. Vasilevskiy and the commander of the front, Col Gen I. D. Chernyakhovskiy, gave particular attention to the employment of artillery and its cooperation with the infantry, tanks and aviation.<sup>14</sup>

During the preparatory period, the basic efforts of the antiaircraft artillery were aimed at covering the troop concentrations, the ammunition and food dumps and so forth. With the deployment of the troops into combat formation, up to 80 percent of the antiaircraft artillery weapons was to be shifted to covering the first operational echelon. Here the armies which were to make the main thrust were to be reinforced with one or two antiaircraft artillery divisions while the corps operating on the main sectors of the field forces were to be covered by forces up to one antiaircraft artillery division. Three antiaircraft artillery groups were organized, for example, for covering the formations of the 6th Guards Army of the First Baltic Front. Two of them were to cover the first echelon rifle corps and one the second echelon of the army and the I Tank Corps in the jump-off position. In individual instances they planned to establish a reserve of the front commander consisting of from one to two antiaircraft artillery divisions.<sup>15</sup>

*On the eve of the general offensive a portion of the artillery of the Third Belorussian and First Baltic Fronts, in collaboration with the aviation, participated in supporting the actions of the reconnaissance detachments (forward battalions) from the first echelon divisions. Prior to their attack artillery softening up was carried out lasting up to 30 minutes. A portion of the artillery from temporary firing positions was involved in this. The surprise actions by the infantry and tanks supported by artillery fire and air strikes led to rather tangible results. The enemy mistook the attack by the Soviet troops in the course of the reconnaissance in force as the start of an offensive and during 22 June committed virtually all its tactical reserves to combat on individual sectors. The success achieved here led to a situation where a portion of the fire tasks planned for the artillery softening up either completely disappeared or required adjustment. For this reason in certain armies and corps the need arose of bringing the artillery offensive plans into accord with the specifically developing situation. For example, in the 6th Guards Army of the First Baltic Front, the duration of the artillery softening up of the attack was somewhat shortened. The amount of artillery involved in it was reduced to 50 percent and the fire tasks were shifted in depth.*

In the area of the LXXII and LXV Rifle Corps from the 5th Army of the Third Belorussian Front, the enemy was forced to alter its previous artillery and mortar grouping. For the purpose of its detection, the long-range artillery group of the army not long before the artillery softening up for the attack

carried out a 5-minute intense shelling of enemy defensive targets (objectives). The return fire by the Nazis provided an opportunity using artillery reconnaissance and observation to significantly clarify the reconnaissance data on the enemy artillery firing positions and promptly give these to the executors.

The results of the artillery softening up for the attack were sufficiently tangible. Thus, in the zone of advance of the XVIII Rifle Corps of the 65th Army on the First Belorussian Front, the Soviet artillery by massed fire strikes in a short period of time won fire superiority over the enemy artillery. The high effectiveness of artillery fire during the period of the artillery softening up can be seen from the instances of the going over of individual formations from the 39th, 5th, 65th and other armies to the attack even before the firing had ended. For example, in the sector of the main thrust of the V Guards Rifle Corps of the 39th Army on the Third Belorussian Front, the commander of the 1st Battalion of the 61st Guards Regiment from the 19th Guards Rifle Division, Guards Maj Fedorov, in observing the course of the artillery softening up, noted that the enemy infantry, unable to withstand the fire of our artillery, was abandoning the first trench. Having immediately reported this to the regimental commander, he requested permission to attack the enemy before the end of the artillery softening up. Due to the clearly organized co-operation with the artillery, the men from the battalion, under the cover of the bursts of their own shells, quickly captured three Nazi trenches, seizing during this three intact bridges across the Luchesa River. This made it possible to successfully develop the offensive in the given sector.<sup>16</sup>

In the course of the artillery softening up for the attack, important targets in the enemy defenses were hit with a high degree of reliability by the rocket artillery, particularly the BM-31-12 battalions. In the breakthrough sector of the 3d Army of the First Belorussian Front, for example, a BM-31-12 battalion completely neutralized an enemy center of resistance to the east of Verichev. Here up to 70 percent of the enemy dugouts were destroyed.<sup>17</sup>

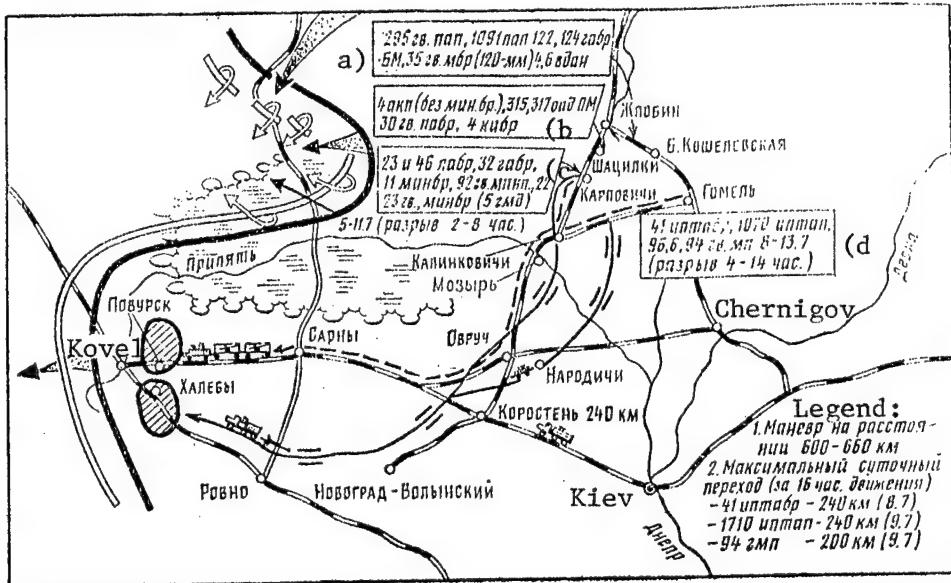
The guns assigned for direct laying fire played an important role in the breakthrough sectors. In addition to destroying and demolishing firing points on the forward edge, on a number of sectors they made passageways through the wire obstacles, thereby contributing to the successful dash of the infantry into the attack.<sup>18</sup>

The artillery softening up of the attack on a number of the breakthrough areas of the First Belorussian Front was carried out by the double rolling barrage method. This made it possible to carry out a simultaneous fire damage to the defending enemy to a great depth with high fire densities and dependable neutralization and destruction of its weapons directly ahead of the attacking troops. The enemy was deprived of the opportunity of maneuvering and observing within the limits of not only the attacked trench but also the subsequent trench to a depth of up to 300-500 m and more.

A characteristic feature of the artillery softening up for the attack on the First Belorussian Front was also the carrying out of the so-called "extended battery volleys." With the start of the artillery support for the attack, the rocket artillery for 50 minutes fired battery volleys with intervals of 5-7

minutes<sup>19</sup> overlapping the fire of the barrel artillery. This significantly increased the degree of neutralizing the enemy.

The wooded-swampy terrain and the limited number of roads necessitated on all the fronts clear planning for the movement of the artillery battle formations. Thus, in the 65th Army where there was only just one improved road and two corduroy roads, the accompaniment guns and the self-propelled artillery followed behind the forward advancing subunits of the infantry and close support tanks, then the artillery of the infantry support groups moved and a portion of the artillery from the corps long-range groups and the army group of rocket launcher units. The remaining artillery, chiefly the large caliber, moved behind the I Guards Tank Corps. Such a formation basically proved effective. Individual instances of the falling behind of the artillery did not substantially influence the course of combat operations.



Maneuvering of Artillery From the First Belorussian Front  
From 5 Through 13 June 1944

**Key:** a--295th Guards Cannon Artillery Regiment, 1091st Cannon Artillery Regiment, 122d, 124th High-Powered Howitzer Artillery Regiment, 35th Guards Mortar Brigade (120-mm), 4th-6th vdan [abbreviation unknown]; b--4th Breakthrough Artillery Corps (without mortar brigade), 315th, 317th Artillery Battalions, 30th Guards Cannon Artillery Brigade, 4th kbir [abbreviation unknown]; c--23d and 46th Cannon Artillery Brigades, 32d Howitzer Brigade, 11th Mortar Brigade, 92d Rocket Launcher Regiment, 22d, 23d Rocket Launcher Brigade (5th Rocket Launcher Battalion); d--41st Antitank Artillery Brigade, 1070th Antitank Artillery Regiment, 96th, 6th and 94th Rocket Launcher Regiments; 1--Maneuver over a distance of 600-660 km; 2--Maximum daily move (in 16 hours of movement): 41st Antitank Artillery Brigade, 240 km (8 July); 1710th Antitank Artillery Regiment, 240 km (9 July), 94th Rocket Regiment, 200 km (9 July).

With the development of battle in depth, in certain rifle formations and units, strong groups of infantry and tank accompaniment weapons were established. For example, on the Third Belorussian Front, each such group consisted of 12-16 guns with a caliber from 45 to 122 mm and these fired with direct laying, being in the battle formations of the companies and battalions. The infantry was accompanied from line to line. Here in each group the guns were coupled. One part of the guns fired while the other under the cover of the first maneuvered under its own power along with the infantry. Such an organization of operations for the accompaniment artillery ensured the effective carrying out of the fire missions in the interests of the infantry. When necessary the enemy personnel and weapons in major strongpoints and centers of resistance were neutralized by massed artillery fire combined with air strikes. Thus, the success of capturing the Bogushev center of resistance by the LXXII Rifle Corps was ensured by massed fire from the formations and units of the 3d Guards Artillery Breakthrough Division (commander, Maj Gen P. M. Rozhanovich) in cooperation with strikes by 270 aircraft from the 1st Air Army.

In the operational depth, the artillery successfully carried out tasks of supporting the crossing of the numerous water barriers. In preparing to cross the Berezina, the artillery staff worked out ahead of time plans for the combat employment of the artillery in crossing it. For example, in the 11th Guards Army they planned a 40-minute artillery softening up of the crossing (30 minutes of deliberate fire with the aim of neutralizing the enemy personnel and weapons and a 10-minute intense shellfire). The artillery support for the attack on the opposite shore was planned by the PSO method for a period of 30 minutes to the defensive depth of the first echelon battalions (up to 1 km). Ammunition consumption was 0.5 unit of fire. To support the crossing, a significant amount of artillery was employed. Thus, prior to the crossing of the Vistula by the troops of the 8th Guards Army in the area of Magnuszew, the artillery densities were from 40 guns and mortars per kilometer of front (XXVIII Guards Rifle Corps) to 72 (XXV Guards Rifle Corps) and even 90 (IV Guards Rifle Corps).

The artillery was also instructively employed in the course of the battles to defeat the enemy groupings (particularly the Minsk) and repel enemy counter-strikes. In destroying the surrounded Nazi troop groupings, the artillery of various calibers by concentrated and massed fire caused severe losses to the enemy. In those instances when the Nazis, in endeavoring to break out of an encirclement, came directly toward the firing positions, the artillery troops hit the enemy with direct laying, they began firing their small arms and boldly engaged in hand-to-hand combat. Often they independently organized the defensive on routes of a probable breakthrough by the surrounded enemy and successfully repelled its fierce attacks.

The Belorussian Operation is also instructive for the prompt and concealed carrying out in the course of the offensive of a maneuver of the artillery within the front from the Bobruysk sector the Kovel, involving the necessity of establishing a strong artillery grouping to support the breakthrough of the previously prepared enemy defenses in the area of Kovel. From 29 June through 4 July, a significant amount of artillery units and formations from the First Belorussian Front, including the IV Artillery Breakthrough Corps, was successively pulled back into the reserve and concentrated in areas to the south of Bobruysk. A march covering 600-660 km was carried out during the period from 5 through

13 July by a combined method, that is, by railroad and under their own power (see the diagram). Rigid control over the regrouping of the artillery, a skillfully organized traffic control service, the well-organized greeting and receiving of the arrived units and formations ensured the concealment of the operational-level maneuver by the artillery and its execution in a short period of time. The distance covered by individual units and formations reached 200-240 km in 16 hours of travel. Around 35,000 motor vehicles participated in the march. By 18 July, due to the skillfully executed regroupings, the number of guns and mortars in the armies on the left flank of the First Belorussian Front had risen from 5,500 to 9,000 units.<sup>20</sup> This made it possible on the army breakthrough sectors to establish an average operational density of up to 180 guns, mortars and rocket artillery combat vehicles per kilometer of front, with a maximum up to 240,<sup>21</sup> to significantly increase the reliability of the fire damage to the enemy and successfully break through its defenses.

In conclusion it must be pointed out that in the course of the Belorussian Operation the artillery troops showed high combat skill and manifested mass heroism. The most outstanding artillery troops received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

During the Belorussian Operation a great deal of effort and art was invested into improving the combat employment of the artillery by Chief Mar Art N. N. Voronov, Mar Art N. D. Yakovlev, Gens V. I. Kazakov, N. M. Khlebnikov, A. K. Sokol'skiy, M. M. Barsukov, I. S. Beskin, P. N. Petropavlovskiy, N. M. Pozharskiy, I. M. Pyrskiy, N. F. Salichko and others. The Belorussian Operation was a new contribution to the theory and practice to the combat employment of artillery. Its diverse combat experience was widely employed by the Soviet Army in the subsequent operations of the Great Patriotic War. It is also of great practical significance at present.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyno 1941-1945 gg." [Soviet Artillery in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1960, pp 431, 432.

<sup>2</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 233, inv. 2317, file 23, sheets 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1976, Vol 1, p 433; "Vtoraya mirovaya voyna 1939-1945" [World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1978, Vol 9, p 44.

<sup>4</sup> G. Ye. Peredel'skiy, A. I. Tokmakov and G. T. Khroshilov, "Artilleriya v boyu i operatsii" [Artillery in an Engagement and Operation], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1980, pp 132-133.

<sup>5</sup> TsAMO, folio 241, inv. 2597, file 145, sheet 17; folio 237, inv. 2418, file 168, sheet 127; folio 233, inv. 2356, file 10, sheet 25.

- <sup>6</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy...," p 439.
- <sup>7</sup> "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1958, Vol III, p 305.
- <sup>8</sup> "Istoriya voyn i voyennogo iskusstva" [The History of Wars and Military Art], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1970, p 270.
- <sup>9</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy...," p 443.
- <sup>10</sup> TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 2356, file 10, sheet 17; folio 241, inv. 2597, file 145, sheet 19.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2317, file 23, sheet 258.
- <sup>12</sup> "Osvobozhdeniya Belorussii 1944" [The Liberation of Belorussia in 1944], Moscow, Nauka, 1974, p 504.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp 26-27.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p 57.
- <sup>15</sup> "Sovetskaya artilleriya v Velikoy...," pp 444, 447.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p 450.
- <sup>17</sup> TsAMO, folio 310, inv. 9025, file 30, sheet 27.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., folio 358, inv. 20455, file 10, sheet 260.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., folio 422, inv. 32160, file 6, sheet 74.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2317, file 76, sheet 14.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., sheet 20.

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## ROLE OF ENGINEER TROOPS IN BELORUSSIAN OPERATION TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 34-40

[Article by Honored Scientist of the RSFSR, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor, Col (Ret) P. Biryukov\*: "Particular Features of the Employment of the Engineer Troops in the Belorussian Operation"]

[Text] By the summer of 1944, the Nazi Command, in endeavoring to hold onto the Belorussian salient covering the shortest route to the German borders, had prepared a deeply echeloned defense ahead of time. All of it, particularly its main zone, was covered by antipersonnel and antitank minefields and explosive obstacles.

Considering the nature of the enemy defenses as well as the circumstance that the terrain over which the Soviet troops had to advance was wooded and had a large number of impassable swamps, rivers, lakes and a poorly developed road network, Hq SHC and the commands of the fronts gave significant attention to the engineer support for the operation. Thus, at a meeting which was held with the command personnel of the First Belorussian Front on 15 June 1944, the representative of Hq SHC, Mar SU G. K. Zhukov, emphasized that the prompt carrying out of the engineer support missions must be considered the most important duty of all levels of commanders.<sup>1</sup>

During the period of preparing for the operation, a number of measures were adopted aimed at reinforcing the fronts with engineer troops. The armies which were to operate on the sectors of the main thrusts included up to 60-70 engineer and combat engineer companies while the 6th Guards Army and 3d Army had up to 100. The operation densities of the engineer troops in these field forces on the First Baltic Front were 8 engineer and combat engineer companies per kilometer of breakthrough front; in the Third Belorussian the figure was 7.2; in the First Belorussian 11 and in the Second Belorussian 13.<sup>2</sup>

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\* During the period of preparing for and conducting the Belorussian Operation, the author was the corps engineer of the XXXVI Rifle Corps of the 31st Army on the Third Belorussian Front.

At the same time work was done to increase the level of the engineer training of the personnel from the other branches of troops. Particular attention was given to working out the questions of the crossing of obstacles, rivers and swamps by the troops.

The assault groupings of the fronts were also reinforced with engineer-construction and road units and formations. For example, on the First Baltic Front there was the 21st Headquarters of Defensive Construction (UOS); in the Third Belorussian Front the 52d Headquarters of Defensive Construction and the 5th Front Headquarters of Defensive Construction (FUOS); on the Second Belorussian Front, the 22d Headquarters of Defensive Construction; on the First Belorussian Front 14 military-construction detachments and 2 road battalions.<sup>3</sup>

During the period of preparing for the operation, new engineer units and formations were organized and the existing ones reinforced. Thus, a combat engineer brigade was incorporated in the TOE of an all-arms army in the place of the previous engineer battalion. A front now included a motorized engineer brigade. The organizing of motorized engineer brigades was started for the tank armies. Separate special battalions armed with amphibious motor vehicles were included in the TOE if a number of mechanized corps. The organizational structure of the assault combat engineer brigades was altered. A battalion of backpack flame-throwers was included in each of them.<sup>4</sup> Certain assault brigades included tank engineer regiments with the PT-3 mine clearers and flamethrower tank regiments.<sup>5</sup> Separate detachments were established for mine clearing as well as battalions of mineclearing dogs.<sup>6</sup> On the fronts the number of pontoon bridge brigades and heavy pontoon bridge regiments of the RVGK [Reserve of the Supreme High Command] was increased.

The basic tasks which determined the particular features of the use of the engineer troops in the course of preparing for the Belorussian Operation were: the organization and conduct of engineer reconnaissance in the aim of determining the passability of the terrain for the troops and equipment; the preparation of the jump-off areas for the offensive and the carrying out of road and bridge work under the conditions of the wooded-swampy terrain; preparing the elements of the panel roads; manufacturing parts for low-level floating wooden bridges for various loads, combat engineer wooden boats and equipment for the crossing of swamps by infantry and tanks and the concentrating of their stocks close to the forward edge; the carrying out of engineer measures in accord with the surprise and deception plan.

In the course of conducting reconnaissance by the forces of the engineer-reconnaissance subunits, the swampy areas of the terrain were carefully studied not only in the area of the forward edge but also in the near depth of the enemy defenses; the most convenient routes for moving up the tanks, SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and artillery were determined; the nature and positions of the obstacles and engineer works were determined in the system of enemy defenses; areas of terrain which were concealed from the Nazis were established for building crossings over water barriers as well as approaches to them.<sup>7</sup>

In preparing the jump-off areas for the offensive on all the fronts, under the leadership of the engineers, great work was done to additionally dig trenches and communications trenches. Their total length, for example, in the areas of

the armies of the First Belorussian Front (chief of engineer troops, Lt Gen Eng Trps A. I. Proshlyakov) was 3,328 km. It should be emphasized that the first trench for the troops readied for the attack was close to the enemy and lay not more than 120-150 m from its forward edge.

Under the conditions of the wooded-swampy terrain, particular attention was given to building and improving the roads, to laying column tracks as well as to building and repairing the bridges. Just in the zone of the Third Belorussian Front (chief of engineer troops, Lt Gen Engr Trps N. P. Baranov), 335 km of road were repaired and 157 bridges were built with a total length of 2,000 linear meters.

For crossing the swamps just in the units of the 28th Army of the First Belorussian Front, by the start of the offensive they had made 1,144 brush mats, 19,214 "wet steps" ["morkostup"; ?an individual crossing device] for the personnel, 234 travois for medium machine guns and 376 travoir for guns.<sup>8</sup>

In the aim of thwarting the crossing of water barriers, the regulation crossing equipment was moved up into the troop concentration areas, the elements of the bridge structures were also concentrated there while improvised crossing equipment was prepared in the subunits and units.

For the carrying out of deception and surprise measures by the troops of the fronts, specially assigned combat engineer and camouflage subunits camouflaged the trains carrying combat equipment by mounting bodies from brush panels on the flatcars. In the aim of misleading the enemy, on the sectors of the planned breakthrough of the defenses the combat engineers set out wire obstacles and dummy minefields. The scale of the camouflage measures can be seen, for example, from the actions of the 15th Camouflage Company and the 6th Engineer Battalion of the First Belorussian Front which made and employed for feint actions some 179 dummy tanks and 225 dummy guns.<sup>9</sup>

In the concluding stage of preparing for the operation, the main forces of the engineer troops on the fronts were switched to building passageways through the minefields ahead of the forward edge and clearing the jump-off areas for the offensive. Just on the Third Belorussian Front, for carrying out this work five engineer brigades and four corps combat engineer battalions were employed. In the zones of the four armies, some 60 passageways were made for tanks and 453 for infantry in their own minefields and in the enemy obstacles.<sup>10</sup> This ensured the safe concentrating and deployment of the troops in the jump-off areas for the offensive and created a possibility of simultaneously attacking the forward edge of the enemy defenses in making the main thrusts.

With the start of the attack, the combat engineer groups of the commandant service clearly organized the passage of the infantry, tanks and artillery through the passageways across the obstacles on the forward edge while the escort combat engineer groups helped the troops cross the minefields deep in the enemy defenses. For making passageways through the obstacles in the course of the attack, for the first time five tank engineer regiments equipped with mine clearers were used.<sup>11</sup> So that the artillery and tanks could comparatively easily cross the swampy areas of the terrain in the course of the breaking through of the defenses, the engineer and pontoon bridge units made extensive

use of previously made, different road and bridge structures. This made it possible to ensure the advance of the troop battle formations at a rather high pace.

Thus, the combat engineers of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies of the First Baltic Front on 23 June, in a period of 10 hours, supported the crossing of a roadless strip of terrain 6 km deep by the battle formations of the first echelon divisions. During the following three days the road-bridge detachment, in using panel road covers for reinforcing the impassable areas, laid an average of 12-13 km of route per day.<sup>12</sup>

On the First Belorussian Front in the zone of the 65th Army, the main thrust was to be made across a swampy area. Here the engineer troops prepared lumber ahead of time for laying corduroy roads in the neutral zone. When on the morning of 26 June, the 69th Rifle Division, in crossing the swamp, attacked the enemy, the army combat engineers under the leadership of the chief of the engineer troops, Gen P. V. Shvydkiy in a short period of time completed the laying of the corduroy roads on the 400-m sector across the neutral zone. Initially the close support tanks crossed successfully over them followed by the antitank guns with high-speed tractors and after them the regiment of self-propelled artillery. The successful crossing of the swampy areas by the heavy combat equipment made it possible to break through the enemy defenses at a rapid pace. This created favorable conditions for committing the I Guards Tank Corps to battle. Three hours after the start of the attack, three of its brigades comprising the first echelon, upon a signal, rushed across the swamp over the log roads.<sup>13</sup>

The tracks laid were soon used by the units of the cavalry-mechanized group [KMG] of Gen I. A. Pliyev to the start-line for the second echelon.

The committing of the front mobile groups to the breakthrough was successfully carried out on the Third Belorussian Front. Thus, the 4th Assault Combat Engineer Brigade (commander, Col S. F. Lukashenko) simultaneously laid four routes from the forward edge to the start-line for the KMG of Lt Gen M. S. Oslikovskiy. On the two routes of the III Guards Mechanized Corps, mine clearing and road rebuilding were carried out by the 17th and 20th Assault Combat Engineer Battalions and the 253d Tank Engineer Regiment. Behind them advanced the 19th and 18th Assault Combat Engineer Battalions with structural elements for building bridges across the Luchesa River. For moving up the 5th Guards Tank Army to the start-line up to the Luchesa they employed the tracks made for the KMG and from this water barrier to the start-line the tank troops moved along roads laid by the 154th and 193d Combat Engineer Battalions and the 377th Motorized Engineer Battalion.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of pursuing the enemy, the basic forces of the engineer troops of the fronts were concentrated on supporting the combat operations of the forward detachments and moving up the columns of the main forces of the formations and field forces. Here the engineer units and subunits carried out work to repair bridges and build roads, they cleared the roads of mines, built and organized crossings over water obstacles and maintained them.

A large amount of work to build roads was carried out by the engineer troops of the First Baltic Front (chief of engineer troops, Maj Gen Engr Trps V. V. Kosarev) in supporting the advance of the main forces on the Polotsk sector. On the 30-km section of the Obol--Polotsk road, where 32 bridges had been destroyed, repair and equipping of the routes were organized in the following manner. The troop combat engineers cleared the route of mines. Moving up behind them were the military construction detachments who completely repaired the route.<sup>15</sup>

During the period of eliminating the surrounded enemy groupings, the engineer units and subunits built passageways through obstacles, they fought as part of the assault groups and detachments and mined exposed areas in attempts by the enemy to break out of the ring. Upon completing the defeat of the surrounded enemy, the engineer units under the front and the RVGK were pulled back into the reserve while the TOE troop and army combat engineer formations were left in the formations and field forces, ready to carry out new missions.

In the development of the offensive, the combat engineers which were part of the forward detachments in a short period of time carried out reconnaissance and built fords and detours, they set up simple crossings and when necessary erected floating bridges. The engineer subunits, when the forward detachments captured bridges across the rivers, quickly prevented their destruction by de-activating the explosive charges and in combat for holding the crossings they mined the approaches. Sometimes they participated directly in the capturing of bridges. Thus, the men of the 121st Separate Combat Engineer Battalion who were fighting with the forward detachment of the 193d Rifle Division, in pursuing the enemy, on 9 July fought and captured a bridge over the Shara River on the Slonim--Baranovichi Highway and ensured the unobstructed crossing of the water obstacle by the troops. Their actions were so unexpected for the enemy that the chief of the Engineer Service of the 9th Nazi Army, Gen Schmidt, who had arrived to inspect the crossing, was taken prisoner.<sup>16</sup>

One of the important tasks for the engineer troops of the First Baltic Front was active participation in repelling enemy counterstrikes. Just in the course of the Shyaulyay Operation, for building obstacles in repelling enemy counter-strikes, the 17th Combat Engineer Brigade and the 10th Assault Combat Engineer Brigade as well as a large portion of the forces from the 29th Combat Engineer Brigade of the 6th Guards Army were employed at full strength.

The actions of the engineer troops of the Third Belorussian Front were marked by extreme intensity in supporting the crossing of the Neman. Preparations for the crossing of the water barrier started 2 or 3 days before reaching the river. Pontoon and engineer units were transferred from the reserve of the front to the armies and crossing gear brought up.<sup>17</sup> From 12 through 17 July, the formations of the front reached the river and immediately began crossing. The troop combat engineer subunits and the engineer units attached to the rifle corps maintained the assault crossings. The first pontoon bridges were put up on the night of 15 July. On 17 July, construction was completed on the first low-water floating bridge in the area of Sudvoy. Two days later, such bridges had been erected in the zones of advance of all the armies. Regardless of the fact that the massed enemy air raids frequently knocked out the bridge crossings, the personnel of the engineer troops, particularly the battalions of the 4th and 8th Pontoon Bridge Brigades, promptly rebuilt them.

In the concluding stage of the operation, the engineer units of the First Belorussian Front supported the successful crossing of the Vistula to the south of Warsaw, in the areas of Magnuszew and Pulawy. In supporting the crossing in the Magnuszew area, the 1st and 4th Heavy Pontoon Bridge Regiments operated particularly successfully. Over the bridge and on rafts from 2 through 11 August, the pontoon troops ferried across more than 2 divisions, around 200 tanks and SAU, 830 guns and other combat equipment.<sup>18</sup> In August, 75,000 mines were set out on the captured bridgeheads and this helped to increase the stability of the Soviet troop defenses. In unsuccessful attacks the enemy lost 45 tanks in our minefields.<sup>19</sup>

At the end of August 1944, the troops of the fronts which had participated in the Belorussian Operation as well as the adjacent field forces which had cooperated closely with them, went over to the defensive upon orders from Hq SHC. In strengthening the achieved lines, the engineer units widely employed mine-laying. At the same time, they carried out mine clearing, thereby creating conditions for the peaceful, creative labor of the Soviet people and the population of Allied Poland on the liberated lands.

There were certain particular features in the control and command of the engineer troops. In preparing for the operation, the necessity arose for the centralized employment of the engineer personnel and equipment. Some 3 or 4 days prior to the start of the operation a transition was made to decentralized control and command of them. This was maintained for the entire period of breaking through the enemy defenses and helped to organize closer cooperation between the engineer units and subunits and the other branches of troops in crossing obstacles, swampy areas and rivers and in actions as part of assault groups and detachments. At this stage centralized use was made only of that portion of the engineer forces and equipment which was laying roads to support the moving up of the mobile groups of the armies and fronts to the start-line.

After breaking through the tactical defensive zone, a large portion of the engineer forces and equipment was withdrawn from under the all-arms formations and used in the course of pursuit basically in a centralized manner. This contributed to the rapid reassigning of the engineer troops to carry out the next, most important missions. In approaching large water barriers, command and control of the engineer troops was again decentralized and remained thus until the crossing had been completed by the first echelon formations of the armies. After this, there was a return to centralized command and control in the aims of developing the crossing and maintaining it. The same principle of command and control was maintained in the concluding stage of the operation in the course of building obstacles in retaining the achieved lines and in repelling enemy counterstrikes.

The basic efforts of the engineer units and subunits in the course of the Belorussian Operation were aimed at increasing the crossability of the terrain, crossing enemy obstacles and supporting the crossing of rivers.

We should also note the practice of providing engineer support for the successive committing of the mobile field forces to a breakthrough on one sector and for their rapid operations on the wooded-swampy terrain.

The actions of the engineer troops during the operation were highly praised by the Supreme High Command. Thousands of soldiers and sergeants and hundreds of officers from the engineer troops received high decorations of the motherland. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was presented to Lt Col M. A. Pankov, Maj S. V. Semenov, Maj A. I. Kanarchik, Jr Lt F. F. Konovalov, Sr Sgt F. T. Blokhin, Jr Sgt I. Ye. Andreyev and Pvt A. M. Plysenko. Scores of engineer units received orders. Honorary names were awarded to 14 brigades, 4 regiments and 36 battalions of the engineer troops.

The rich experience acquired by the engineer troops in the Belorussian Operation was utilized and enriched in the subsequent operations of the war. It has also not lost its importance under present-day conditions.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 233, inv. 71448, file 7, sheet 77.

<sup>2</sup> "Istoriya voyn i voyennogo iskusstva" [The History of Wars and Military Art], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1970, p 271.

<sup>3</sup> Each UOS of the RVGK had under it up to 12 military-construction detachments while the FUOS had 4. In terms of the number of personnel, a military construction detachment surpassed an engineer battalion by 1.5-fold.

<sup>4</sup> TsAMO, folio 69, inv. 12112, file 362, sheet 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., inv. 28975, file 2, sheet 110.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., folio 56, inv. 12214, file 600, sheet 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., folio 233, inv. 71448, file 7, sheets 4, 7; folio 69, inv. 28970, file 43, sheet 134.

<sup>8</sup> "Sbornik materialov po izucheniyu opyta voyny" [Collection of Materials on Studying the Experience of the War], Moscow, Voyenizdat, No 15, 1945, p 109.

<sup>9</sup> TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 32301, file 1, sheet 28.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., folio 69, inv. 34679, file 15, sheet 24.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., folio 233, inv. 14943, file 8, sheets 28, 29. On the First Baltic Front there was one regiment while on the Third and First Belorussian Fronts, two regiments each.

<sup>12</sup> TsAMO, folio 69, inv. 272734, file 75, sheet 46.

<sup>13</sup> P. I. Batov, "V. pokhodakh i boyakh" [In Campaigns and Battles], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1962, pp 280-282.

<sup>14</sup> TsAMO, folio 332, inv. 4986, file 12, sheet 157.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., folio 69, inv. 272734, file 75, sheet 67.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., folio 659, inv. 81131, file 2, sheet 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., folio 69, inv. 34679, file 16, sheet 43.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., inv. 28970, file 49, sheet 62.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., file 41, sheet 22.

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## ORGANIZATION OF SIGNAL TROOPS IN BELORUSSIAN OFFENSIVE EXAMINED

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[Article by Mar Sig Trps A. Belov, chief of communications of the USSR Armed Forces\*: "The Organization of Communications in the Belorussian Offensive Operation"]

[Text] Communications during the Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation was organized considering the rich experience gained by the command and the staffs in the course of the previous operations. However, this was a specific feature related to the great spatial scope of this operation, to the more rigid centralization of troop command and control by Hq SHC and the commanders of the front, by the carrying out of bold and decisive maneuvers to encircle large enemy groupings, by the use of a large number of mobile groups and by the particular features of the terrain.

By the start of the operation the signal troops of the Soviet Army were armed with a significant number of new or modernized means of communications and had a more advanced organizational structure. Thus, the signals units had received the 2BDA-43 Baudot telegraphs, the M-44 Morse equipment and the new design TAI-43 telephones. This wire communications equipment was marked by high reliability and operating simplicity under field conditions. Also of important significance was the use of equipment for high-frequency multiplexing of the wire communications lines and the new types of Soviet-produced cables such as the PPK-4 field coil-loaded cable and the RTTV-1 voice-frequency single-core cable with vinyl chloride insulation.<sup>1</sup>

The radio communications equipment also was filled out with new devices. The troops began receiving the A-7A ultrashort wave radios.<sup>2</sup> Its range was around 10 km. The radio provided dependable communications in operating in an USW band on 101 fixed waves and was widely used for troop command and control on the regiment--battalion level. The Kometa-type radio insert which appeared in the signal units for the wire lines made it possible to establish contact across water barriers and impassable areas of terrain.

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\* During the described period, A. I. Belov was the signals chief of the III Guards Mechanized Corps of the Third Belorussian Front.

As a whole by the summer of 1944, the saturating of the units and formations with radio equipment had significantly increased. For example, the number of radios in a rifle division had increased by more than 2-fold in comparison with the start of the year and by almost 6-fold in comparison with the first months of the war.<sup>3</sup> As a total, the four fronts had 27,174 radios.<sup>4</sup> This made it possible to supply the troops of the fronts with radio communications equipment in accord with the TOE requirements.

Along with improving the quality and increasing the quantity of signals equipment, by the start of the Belorussian Operation, the organizational structure of the Signal Troops had also been improved. Thus, at the start of 1944, a tank army included telegraph line-laying and telephone construction companies in the place of the previous two telegraph maintenance companies. Thus, the army included a signals regiment, a telegraph line laying company and three telephone construction companies.<sup>5</sup> This significantly increased the capabilities of the signal troops of a field force to build new wire communications lines and operate the existing ones both in the period of preparing for the operation and in the course of the offensive.

In May-June 1944, separate heavy-cable companies (PPK-4) and telephone construction companies with double-wire cable equipment were organized and incorporated in the TOE of the all-arms armies.<sup>6</sup> This increased the rate of construction for the multichannel army signals main artery and links to the formations making the main thrust.

In the interests of improving communications between the General Staff and the fronts, at the beginning of 1944, the positions of chiefs of the operations communications links were introduced on the TOE of the Main Signals Directorate of the Soviet Army and they were responsible for the uninterrupted communication of the General Staff with the front (fronts) of the sector assigned to them.

In preparing for the operation, great importance was given to the questions of organizing command, control and communications. Basic and auxiliary communications centers were readied and the command and observation posts for the commanders of the fronts, armies, formations and units were equipped and provided with communications. In the aim of bringing the command bodies closer to the troops, operations groups were set up on the staffs of the fronts and armies. On the staff of a front such a group was headed by the chief of the operations headquarters or his deputy and on an army staff by the deputy chief of staff. The operations group included, as a rule, officers from the operations, intelligence and cipher sections. Moreover, the operations group of an army staff included also representatives from the staffs of artillery, the armored and mechanized troops and engineer troops while the operations group of a front staff (when necessary) could include the commander of artillery, the commander of the armored and mechanized troops and the commander of the air army with officers from their staffs. The operations groups had mobile communications centers.

Particular attention was paid to providing communications between the ground troops as well as between them and the aviation. Between the all-arms field forces this was maintained by a radio-equipped liaison officer sent to the adjacent field force on the left. For maintaining close cooperation between

the aviation and ground troops, the commanders of the air corps and separate air divisions were stationed at the command posts of the army commanders; the staff officers of the air corps and divisions were at the command posts of the commanders of all corps and the commanders of the tank (mechanized) brigades; commanders of the assault air divisions were at the command posts of the corps fighting on the main sectors; fighter air control officers with radios were in the battle formations of the troops some 1.5-2 km behind the front line. RSB radios were also mounted on the tanks for controlling the ground attack planes and fighters.

Communications between the fronts was provided directly and through special-purpose communications centers (USON) or the communications centers of the Hq SHC representatives.

*During the preparatory period and at the start of the operation, wire communications played a major role in troop command and control.* The organization of wire communications on the front level was planned by main artery and links to each army. The capacity of the main communications line depending upon the effective strength and tasks given to the front as well as the nature of the terrain was 6-8 wires. The communications links to the armies were to be built with a capacity of 4-6 wires.

Wire communications was organized on each of the fronts differently. An exception was only the Third and Second Belorussian Fronts where wire communications did not have any particular differences in the initial position for the offensive.

On the First Baltic Front, in the course of preparing for the operation, the signal troops carried out a significant amount of work. They built and rebuilt 850 km of wire lines for the main trunk and links and hung 2,787 km of wire.<sup>7</sup> This made it possible for the staff of the front and its operations group to have in the jump-off position independent communications channels with the General Staff as well as telegraph and telephone contact with the army staffs and their operations groups. The communications center organized at the observation post of the front commander, Army Gen I. Kh. Bagramyan, had direct contact not only with the observation posts of the commanders of the 6th Guards and 43d Armies, but also with the commanders of the XXII, XXIII and I Rifle Corps fighting on the sector of the main thrust. The wire communications network created made it possible for the front's staff to also maintain steady telephone and telegraph communications with the adjacent fronts while the flank armies of the front could do this also with their adjacent neighbors.

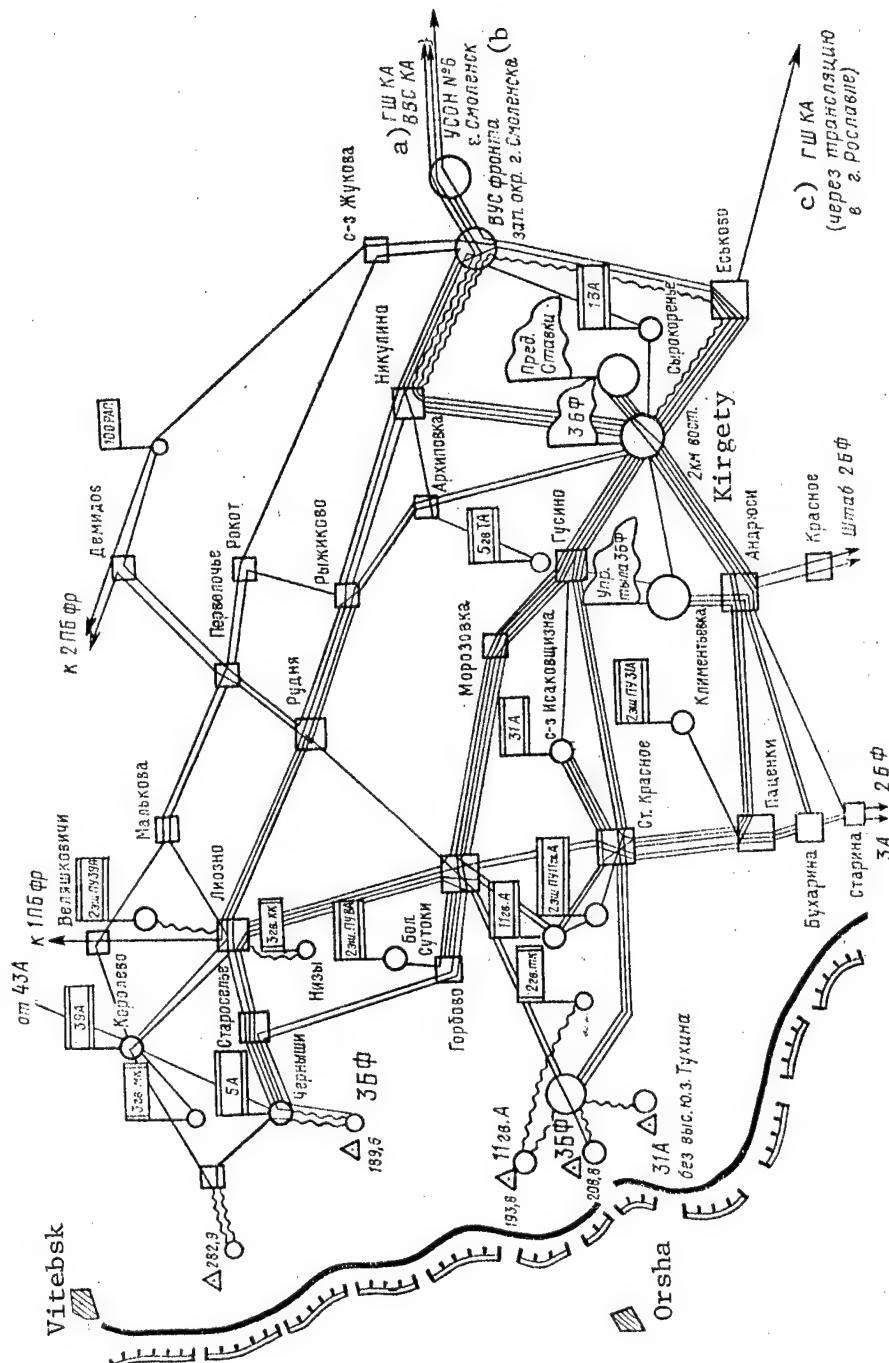
In the Third Belorussian Front, for providing wire communications in the jump-off position, chiefly the existing permanent telephone and telegraph lines were used. The signal troops had to build only 106 km of new lines and run 231 km of wire for increasing the capacity of the lines on individual links and preparing communications for the VPU [auxiliary command post] with the observation post of the front commander. After carrying out this work the front's command post had wire communications with the General Staff over two telegraph channels as well as with the command posts of the First and Second Baltic and Second Belorussian Fronts, the armies and mobile formations. HF telephone communications of the front command post was provided with the observation post of the

front commander, the General Staff and the staffs of the adjacent fronts via the communications center of the operations group under the representative of Headquarters, Mar SU A. M. Vasilevskiy, and direct communications with all the armies and mobile formations. The command post of the front (see the diagram) was set up 12 days prior to the start of the operation some 40 km to the west of Smolensk in the region of Kirgety. Its distance from the front line reached 45 km. Some 3 km from the forward edge in the area of elev. 208.8 (25 km to the northeast of Orsha, an observation post of the front commander was established and during the breakthrough of the enemy defenses the commander, the operations group of the front staff and the commanders of the branches of troops were to be here. In addition to the main observation post, in the zone of advance of the 5th Army, an observation post was set up designed for command over the right flank grouping of the front.

The development of the wire communications on the front in the course of the operation was planned up to a depth of 160 km by building and repairing the permanent telephone and telegraph communications lines. The main artery of the front was to be built and repaired along the Minsk Highway. It was to be employed as a communications link to the 11th Guards Army and the 5th Guards Tank Army. For building and repairing the artery up to the point of reaching the Vitebsk--Orsha lateral line, 10 telegraph line laying companies were assigned.<sup>8</sup> The rebuilding and construction of the first front lateral line was planned on the Tumanovo--Orsha line 25-30 km from the line where the army staffs were located in the jump-off position for the offensive. Other lateral lines were to be built every 30-50 km. In the aim of increasing the line construction rate, the signals chief of the front, Maj Gen Sig Trps I. I. Burov, reinforced the front line signals units with one telephone construction company from the 39th Army and one telegraph line laying company from the 5th Guards Tank Army.

The organization of wire communications on the First Belorussian Front represented a more difficult problem. Definite difficulties were caused by the extent of the front line in the jump-off position (up to 760 km), the poorly developed network of telephone and telegraph lines, the presence on the front of a large number of troops which were split by the Pinsk Swamps into two groupings, the wooded-swampy terrain and other factors. However, the men of the signals units successfully resolved the rising problems and by the start of the operation had established an extensive wire communications network which included two front main arteries and links to the field forces. As a result, the command post of the front had telephone and telegraph communications with the auxiliary command posts on the right and left wings of the front (VPU No 1 and VPU No 2), telephone contact with the 65th and 28th All-Arms Armies and the 16th Air Army, to telegraph communications channels with the General Staff, one each with the command posts of the Second Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts and a special-purpose communications center. The HF telephone communications was provided with the General Staff, the operations group of the representative of Headquarters, Mar SU G. K. Zhukov, with the second Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts and with the second echelon of the front staff while via the communications center at the VPU No 1 and VPU No 2, with the command posts of the armies on the left and right wings.

The VPU No 2 had telephone-telegraph and government HF communications with the command posts of the 3d, 48th, 65th and 28th All-Arms Armies, the 16th Air Army



## Diagram of Wire Communications on the Third Belorussian Front in Jump-Off Position for Offensive

a--To Red Army General Staff and Red Army Air Force  
b--Front communications node on the western outskirts of Smolensk  
c--To the Red Army General Staff (by relay via Roslavl)

Key:

and cavalry-mechanized group [KMG], with the operations group of the representative of Headquarters, with the command post of the Second Belorussian Front and with the second echelon of the front staff.

From the VPU No 1, telephone and governmental HF communications was established with the command post of the front, with the operations group of the representative of the Headquarters, the command posts of the 61st, 70th, 69th, 47th and 8th Guards, the 2d Tank, 1st Polish and 6th Air Armies.

In the course of the operation, they planned the rebuilding and construction of the communications main artery on the right wing of the front with six wires and for the armies four wires each over separate links. On the left wing an eight-wire main artery was to be rebuilt and built while the armies were to have permanent overhead lines for the individual links with a capacity of four wires each.

Such an organization of wire communications made it possible in the course of the operations to locate the command post of the front, in the event of necessity, both on the right and left wing.

*Radio communications during the period of preparing and conducting the Belorussian Operation* was organized and provided for the radio nets and radio links. This was planned on all levels of command from the general staff down to the rifle (tank) company and for each aircraft and tank, inclusively.<sup>9</sup> Particular importance was given to providing radio contact between the armies fighting on adjacent wings of neighboring fronts, with the mobile formations during their operations in the operational depth and between the ground troops and aviation. Radio communications between the fronts, upon orders of the GUSKA [Main Signals Directorate of the Red Army] was organized according to a special radio net of the General Staff and this included the radios of the front staffs, the operations groups of the representatives of Hq SHC, Mars SU G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevskiy, and the special-purpose communications centers. For providing communication between formations and field forces operating toward one another in encircling the enemy groupings, two meeting coordination radio nets were established. One of these provided communication between the 43d Army of the First Baltic Front and the 39th Army of the Third Belorussian Front which surrounded the Vitebsk grouping of Nazi troops, and the second between the troops of the First and Third Belorussian Fronts which surrounded the Minsk Nazi grouping. As combat operations later showed, these radio nets played a major role in the operations to encircle the enemy.

On the First Baltic Front, radio communications of the General Staff with the front's staff and its operations group, with the adjacent fronts and their armies fighting on adjoining wings was maintained over the radio nets and links. Here communication with the General Staff was planned both directly as well as via the USON. The front's staff had radio communication with all its armies and the I Tank Corps with mobile radios for the individual links, for the coordination net and the low-power radio nets.<sup>10</sup>

Radio communications between the staff of the Third Belorussian Front and the General Staff was provided over two channels, voice-frequency and radio-Baudot. For liaison communications with the adjacent fronts, a special General Staff

radio net was organized. Radio communications between the front's staff and the all-arms armies, the mobile formations and field forces was planned over several channels using low-power radios and medium-power radios.<sup>11</sup> In particular, for communications with the field forces using the RB radios, two radio nets and one link were organized. The Sever [North] radios were to be employed for communications not only with the armies but also with the corps. Communications with the 5th Guards Tank Army, the III Guards Mechanized Corps and the III Guards Cavalry Corps was to be maintained over radio nets and separate links by the radios of the liaison officers sent to them. Liaison radio communications within the front was organized under a radio net which included the radios of the all-arms and air armies, the separate mobile formations and tank army.<sup>12</sup> For maintaining dependable radio communication with the mobile groups, at the communications center of the front's command post a group of radios was readied for the staff officers who traveled out to the mobile formations. The radios were mounted on cross-country motor vehicles.<sup>13</sup>

In the Second Belorussian Front, communications of the front's staff with the General Staff was also organized over two channels. Special General Staff radio nets were established for providing communications with the adjacent fronts, the operations group of the Hq SHC representative as well as between the front's field forces and the General Staff. The front's staff maintained communications with its own armies over the main radio net and the radio links. Communications with the front's mobile group was organized over a separate radio link. A radio net was established for providing the front's commander with radio communications between the main observation posts and the forward observation posts located in the battle formations of the first echelon rifle divisions.

The system of radio communications in the First Belorussian Front was unique. Radio communications was planned and organized from three command posts: the front's command post, VPU No 1 and VPU No 2. From the command post radio communications was planned as follows: with the General Staff, the adjacent fronts, the operations group of the Hq SHC representative, with both VPU, with the staffs of the armies, mobile formations and the Dnieper Naval Flotilla. From the VPU No 2, radio communications was organized with the General Staff, the front's command post, the VPU No 1, and the command posts of the field forces and the mobile group on the front's right wing. Radio communications from the VPU No 1 was planned in an analogous manner. Special nets and links were established for communications, including the radio net of the General Staff.

*In the course of the Belorussian Operation, particularly in its first stage, regardless of the high rates of advance, the frequent shifts in the command posts and the impassability of the terrain, wire communications was a major means of troop command and control primarily on the levels of the General Staff--front staff, front staff--army staff. This was organized in accord with a plan by main artery and links with the establishing of a broad network of auxiliary communications centers and testing points. Although in the course of pursuing the enemy, wire communications was confronted with significant difficulties, experience showed that with its correct organization and with a sufficient amount of men and equipment this could be dependable on the main sectors over the entire period of the operation. This was achieved by building a main artery with*

the establishing of a forward auxiliary communications center at the end of it and from this center lines were built to the subordinate staffs.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the operation, an enormous role in troop command and control was played by radio communications. With the fluid operations and the rapid rate of advance, on the staffs of the armies, corps, divisions and regiments it was the basic means of communications and in the mobile formations sometimes the only means of control. The stability and reliability of radio communications were achieved by its skillful organization and the providing of multiple channels as well as by the great attention to it from all levels of staffs and signals chiefs. In the course of the operation the use of mobile communications centers mounted on cross-country vehicles was of great importance.

The ground mobile means of communications and liaison aircraft provided inestimable aid to the staffs. The PO-2 aircraft were the most maneuverable mobile means of communications in all stages of operation. The mobile means of communications effectively complemented radio and wire communications.

The experience of the Belorussian Operation showed that steady troop command and control can be achieved only with the integrated use of all the communications forces and equipment. Many principles and methods of organizing communications during this operation were the basis for improving this in the following operations of the Great Patriotic War.

In the course of the Belorussian Operation, the signals chiefs of the fronts, Gens K. A. Babkin, I. I. Burov, N. A. Borzov, P. Ya. Maksimenko, as well as the signals chiefs of the field forces and formations made a major contribution to organizing successful troop command and control.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 71, inv. 12173, file 664, sheet 85.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., file 225, sheet 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., file 275, sheet 196.

<sup>4</sup> "Istoriya razvitiya voysk svyazi" [History of the Development of the Signal Troops], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1980, p 209.

<sup>5</sup> TsAMO, folio 71, inv. 12171, file 165, sheet 136.

<sup>6</sup> "Istoriya razvitiya voysk...," p 210.

<sup>7</sup> "Sbornik materialov po izucheniyu opyta voynы" [Collection of Materials on Studying the Experience of the War], Moscow, Voyenizdat, No 18, 1945, p 31.

<sup>8</sup> TsAMO, folio 71, inv. 121191, file 70, sheet 228.

<sup>9</sup> I. T. Peresypkin, "Svyaz' v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе" [Signals During the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Nauka, 1973, p 222.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp 222-223.

<sup>11</sup> TsAMO, folio 241, inv. 45442, file 2, sheets 112-114.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., folio 326, inv. 5074, file 60, sheet 113.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., folio 241, inv. 2605, file 144, sheet 7.

<sup>14</sup> I. T. Peresypkin, op. cit., p 226.

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## ROLE OF REAR SERVICES IN BELORUSSIAN OPERATIONS VIEWED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 49-60

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Col Gen K. Abramov, chief of the Military Academy of the Rear and Transport: "Certain Particular Features in Rear Troop Support During the Belorussian Operation"]

[Text] The measures relating to rear support for the troops during the Belorussian Operation were carried out under the difficult conditions of the operational and rear situation. The operation involved a major troop grouping consisting of four fronts which were to make strong, deep strikes simultaneously on several distant sectors. The operation had a great spatial scope. The troops were to fight under the difficult conditions of a wooded-swampy terrain. All of this introduced particular features into carrying out the rear support tasks and demanded from the rear bodies high efficiency and a creative approach in determining the forms and methods of carrying these out, the economic consumption of the existing resources and the flexible maneuvering of them in the course of combat.

*In preparing for the offensive, great attention was given to the prompt establishing of the operational rear groupings.* In all the fronts the basic rear resources were concentrated according to the sectors of operations of the assault groupings. For increasing the stability and mobility of rear support the fronts and armies established reserves, while the dumps with the supplies of materiel, the medical, road, motor transport, railroad and repair units and facilities were brought closer to the front line and were organized in two-three echelons in depth (see the diagram).

The first echelon of the front rear services (a portion of the dumps and their sections with ammunition and fuel supplies, the forward mobile hospitals and the road and railroad units) was deployed in the rear areas of the armies some 30-50 km from the forward edge. The second echelon comprising the basic resources of the front rear was located in the areas of the front regulating stations, 80-120 km from the front line. The third echelon (separate dumps, filled evacuation hospitals, repair and certain other rear units and facilities) was located 200-250 km in the front rear areas.

The army rear units and facilities were also echeloned in depth. In the jump-off position, the basic portion of these was positioned in the areas of the army

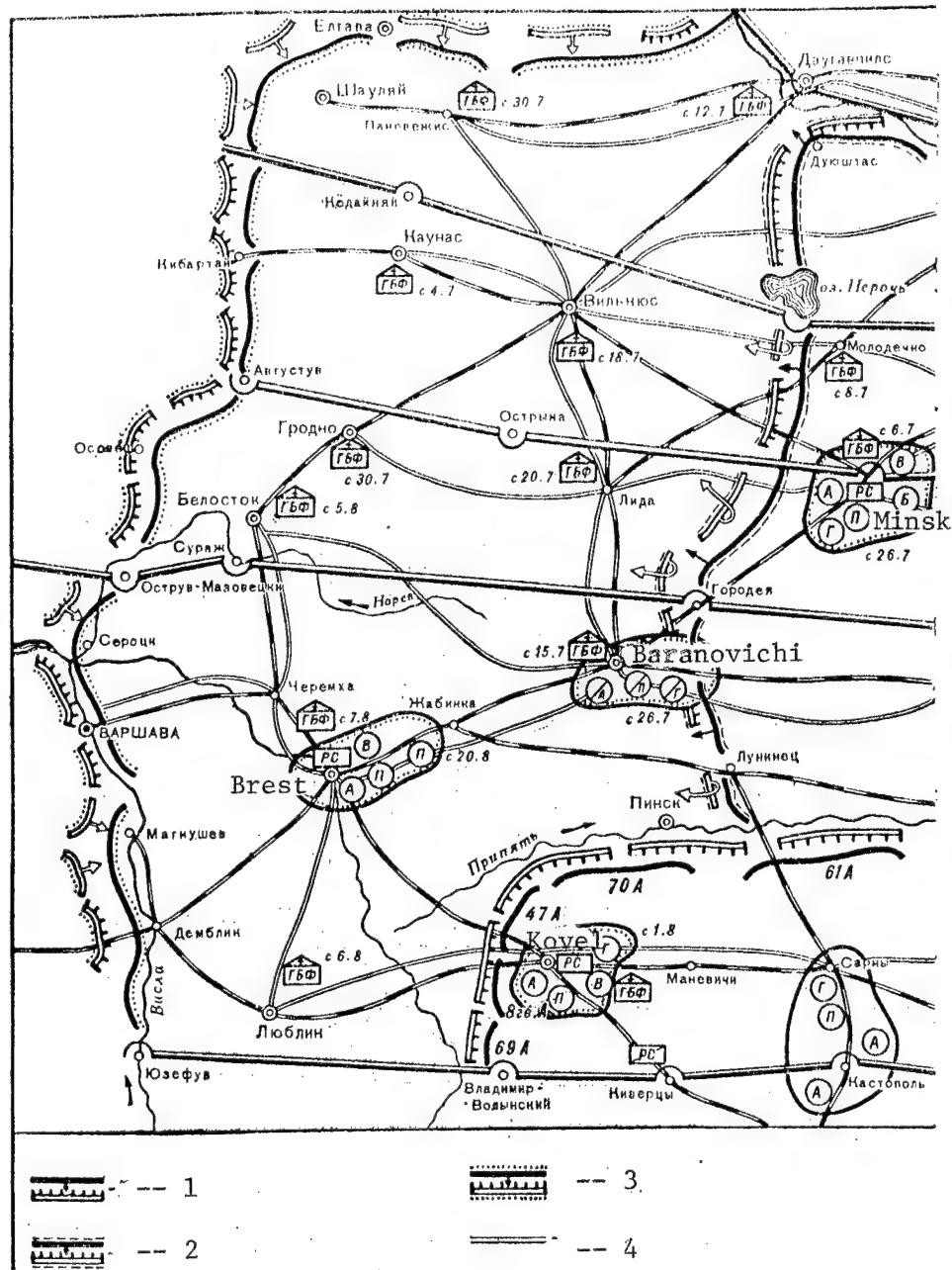
railheads, 20-30 km from the forward edge. The mobile rear units and subunits of the armies (the field mobile hospitals, the motor and horse medical companies, the road and repair-recovery units and subunits) were brought up into the troop rear areas and positioned directly next to the troop battle formations. These units and subunits were loaded up ready to follow the troops with the start of the offensive.

Thus, the deep echeloning of the operational rear was one of the particular features in the given operation and more fully conformed to the nature of the forthcoming troop operations. It made it possible to rationally utilize the rear resources existing in the fronts and armies in preparing for the operation and promptly moved them up to the main sectors for supporting the assault groupings in the course of the development of the offensive. The necessary stability of rear operations was also provided in the event of the making of strong counterstrikes by the enemy.

The operational rear groupings in the jump-off position on the First Baltic, Second and Third Belorussian Fronts were organized by moving up from the rear the dumps, hospitals, road and other rear units and facilities. On the First Belorussian Front, a majority of the rear units with supplies of materiel in April-May 1944 were on the left wing of the front in the area of Sarny, Kivertsy, Korosten, Ovruch. With the receipt at the end of May of the Headquarters Directive for carrying out the Belorussian Operation and with the setting of the axis of the main thrust (on the Bobruysk sector), the rear bodies in a limited period of time had to maneuver the men and equipment to the right wing, to the area of Zhlobin, Kalinkovichi, Gomel. However, due to the limited capacity of the railroads, the shortage of rolling stock and the systematic enemy air strikes, it was impossible to fully carry out this task by the start of the operation. A significant portion of the front rear resources was left in the previous areas. One of the reasons for such a situation was also the delayed orientation of the rear chief concerning the grouping and the axes of advance by the front's troops.

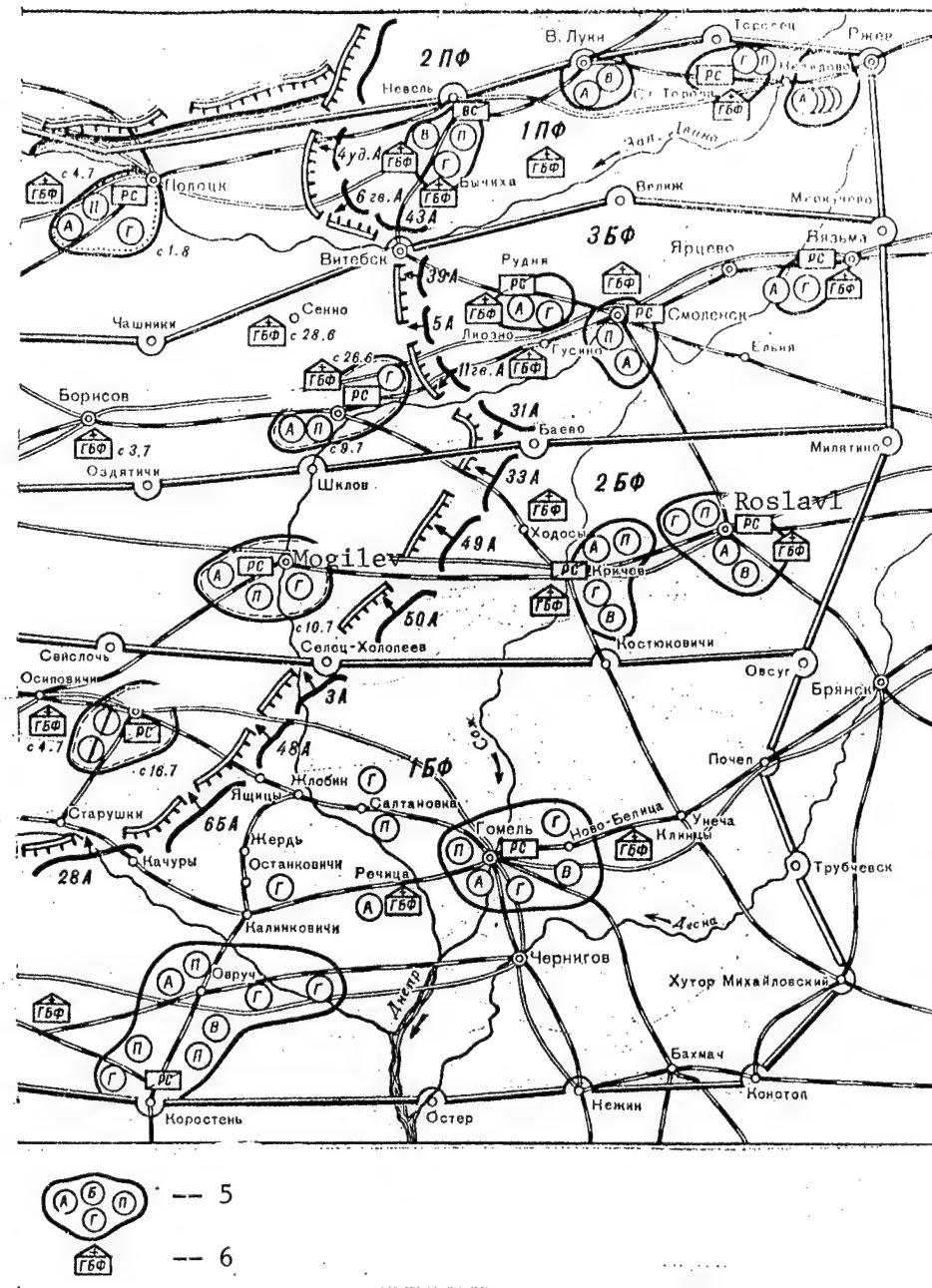
In the course of the successful development of the operation, the sections of the front and army depots, the medical, road, repair-recovery and other units and facilities were brought systematically closer to the troops. A particular feature of the moving up of the front and army rear units and facilities behind the advancing troops was that the basic burden of delivering the materiel to the troops rested at the start of the operation on motor transport due to the extremely slow pace of rebuilding the railroads. Over the rebuilt rail sections, the sections of the front depots were moved up into the areas of Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruysk only in mid-July (10-16 July), when the distance of the supply depots from the troops had reached 400-500 km.

On the fronts an extremely tense situation developed with the delivery of materiel. During this period on the head sections of the rebuilt railroad lines, the armies were periodically assigned new railheads (unloading stations) and a portion of the trains carrying fuel and ammunition was redirected to them. The head sections of the army field bases (GOPAB) were moved closer to the advancing troops on motor transport and they moved, as a rule, every 2 or 3 days. The basic strength of the army and front bases was at that time still in the jump-off areas. Only from the end of July, when the pace of rebuilding the railroads had significantly risen, did the depots begin to gradually move to the areas of Polotsk, Minsk, Brest, Kovel (see the diagram).



### Configuration of the Rear of the Fronts

Key: 1--Position of troops by start of operation  
2--Front line by end of 4 July  
3--Front line at conclusion of operation  
4--Front military roads



## During the Belorussian Operation

5--Locations of front dumps, motor transport, repair and other rear units and facilities

#### 6--Locations of front hospital facilities

A characteristic feature in the basing of the front rear services during this period was the bringing of the front regulating stations (FRS) closer to the troops. On all the fronts, the FRS in the jump-off position were designed just 80-120 km from the forward edge (the First Baltic in Staraya Toropa, the Third Belorussian in Smolensk, the Second Belorussian in Roslavl and the First Belorussian in Novo-Belitsa and Korosten). Such a placement of the FRS contributed to the rapid delivery of materiel to the front dumps and troops. At the same time the responsibility and the role of the central rear bodies were increased for carrying out the supply shipments.

It must be pointed out that in the course of the Belorussian Operation, the Central Rear Services bodies gave constant attention to uninterrupted logistical support for the fronts. Even in April preliminary calculations had been drawn up and submitted to the State Defense Committee [GKO] for the requirements of the four fronts for weapons, ammunition, fuel, supplies, food and other logistical means.<sup>1</sup> In accord with the overall plan, the troop shipments by all types of transport were planned and organized in detail. Under the direct leadership of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Chief of the Rear Services of the Soviet Army, Army Gen A. V. Khrulev, the Staff of the Red Army Rear Services and the Central VOSO [Military Railroads] Directorate carried out literally hourly control over the operational and supply shipments and intervened in them. The concentration of troops and the stockpiling of materiel on the fronts in May-June 1944 were constantly watched by the General Staff, the representatives of Hq SHC Mars SU G. K. Zhukov and A. M. Vasilevskiy as well as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief I. V. Stalin himself.

With delays and deviations from the plan, the necessary measures were taken immediately and additional logistical aid provided to the fronts. Thus, in preparing for the operation, in the aims of promptly establishing fuel supplies, upon a decision of the chief of the Soviet Army Rear Services, in the fronts shuttle tank trains (with 20 50-ton tankcars in each) were organized and they, in traveling under the protection of crews from the FRS to the Caucasus and back, delivered fuel significantly faster.<sup>2</sup> In mid-July, when an extremely serious situation had developed with the delivery of ammunition and fuel, upon the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the fronts were immediately strengthened with five railroad brigades for increasing the pace of rebuilding the railroads. At the same time, 40 LI-2 aircraft were assigned from the Central Reserve to the First Belorussian Front for delivering fuel to the cavalry-mechanized group [KMG] of Lt Gen I. A. Pliyev.<sup>3</sup>

The constant attention from Headquarters and the central rear service bodies and the adopting of the necessary measures by them to strengthen the fronts contributed to the continuous logistical support of the troops in all stages of the Belorussian Operation. According to the calculations of the central rear services bodies, for carrying out the operation the fronts would need significant materiel, including: 4-5 units of fire for ammunition, 12 fuelings of aviation gasoline, 15 fuelings of diesel fuel, 10 fuelings of gasoline and up to 500,000 tons of food and fodder. Just in preparing for the operation (May-June), according to the plan of the Center, the fronts received more than 44,000 carloads of various military freight, including 12,511 carloads of ammunition, 17,299 tanker cars of fuel and 10,485 carloads of food.<sup>4</sup> On the fronts by the start of the offensive this made it possible to establish relatively high supplies of the basic types of

materiel. For example, they had from 14 to 25 daily rations of food. The supply of the troops with ammunition was higher than in any previously conducted strategic operation in the Great Patriotic War. The fronts had from 2.2 to 8.3 units of fire for shells and mortar shells of different calibers. The basic part of the ammunition (up to 60-80 percent), particularly the large caliber, was in the troops and at the army dumps.<sup>5</sup>

The fronts were supplied not completely with fuel: there were just 2.5-4.1 fuelings for gasoline, 6.3-7.6 for diesel fuel and 4.0-10.4 for aviation fuel. Prior to the operation in the troops a range of measures was carried out to rigidly save fuel. For example, on the First Belorussian Front several thousand motor vehicles were put on the reserve ("put up on blocks") and in all the formations and units mass adjustment of the carburetors was carried out, empty runs were minimized, the towing of vehicles was introduced and the use of cart and rail transport was expanded as much as possible. This made it possible to reduce the limits for fuel consumption by 30 percent. However, this problem was not fully resolved. In the course of the offensive, on all the fronts fuel consumption significantly surpassed the existing supplies, since the roads in Belorussia at times required double and even treble the consumption rate of fuel and lubricants. Particularly great difficulties had to be overcome in supplying the troops with gasoline. By the start of the operation, its stocks had been established considering the support for a troop offensive to a depth of 250-300 km. Actually, it developed at a more rapid pace and the troops advanced forward some 500-600 km. For this reason, the supply bodies were forced in the second stage of the operation to literally supply the troops "off the truck" and quickly deliver to them the fuel received by rail using motor vehicle and even air transport.

In the course of the offensive a good deal of difficulties arose in supplying the troops with ammunition. However, the reason for this was not the limited nature of the supplies but rather the successful actions of the troops of the fronts and the shortage of motor transport in the rear bodies.

The duration of the artillery softening up on the fronts in planning the artillery offensive was set from 2 hours to 2 hours and 20 minutes. At the firing positions of the artillery and mortar batteries they laid down 2.0-2.5 units of fire for gun and mortar shells. But in line with the successful operations of the forward battalions which commenced the offensive on the First Baltic, Second and Third Belorussian Fronts, the duration of the artillery softening up and the support for the attack in certain armies were significantly shortened. The artillery units moved forward behind the advancing troops and the unused ammunition (the units were unable to carry this on their own transport) remained at the former firing positions scattered among the forests, swamps and sands of Belorussia. Under the conditions of the lack of roads and the shortage of motor transport in the rear it was virtually impossible to carry them out (on the First Belorussian Front alone over 30,000 tons of gun and mortar shells were left in a hundred stacks).<sup>6</sup> As a result, the artillery units and formations soon began feeling an acute shortage of ammunition. For this reason, in the course of the operation, the Central Rear bodies had to accelerate the delivery of not only fuel but also ammunition. In July-August the fronts received over 48,000 carloads of materiel, including 24,982 with fuel and 9,865 with ammunition.<sup>7</sup>

*In preparing for the Belorussian Operation, virtually the entire amount of supply and evacuation movements on the front level was carried out by rail transport. Over the rail sections the materiel was delivered to the front dumps, the railheads and unloading stations of the all-arms, tank and air armies, the tank, mechanized and cavalry corps. In the jump-off position, each army was given, as a rule, two railheads some 20-30 km from the front line while the unloading stations were set even closer. For example, on the First Belorussian Front, the unloading stations for the 48th Army (Yashchitsa) and the 28th Army (Kachury) were designated literally 5-8 km from the forward edge.*

*Due to the great intensity of the operational and supply shipments, precise train traffic control was of great importance for the sections, areas and railheads. Great experience in carrying out these measures was gained by the rear bodies of the First Belorussian Front. On this front the railroad junction of Novo-Belitsa and the bridge across the Sozh River at Gomel were unable to handle the entire flow of operational and supply trains moving to Zhlobin and Kalin-kovichi. A significant portion of them had to be unloaded on sidings. The front's military council adopted a decision to establish a special operations group headed by a deputy commander who was chief of the rear services of the front. The group (improvised staff) included responsible representatives from not only the rear services but also the personnel department of the front staff, the commander of the armored troops, the artillery staff and other branches of troops and services. The operations group, in thoroughly studying the importance and urgency of each train, on the spot decided whether it could go forward or would be unloaded on the sidings. To ensure the unloading of the operational trains and supply transports on the approaches to Novo-Belitsa the railroad troops built around 20 rail stations where they established sections of the front fuel and food dumps and hospitals. The road troops here prepared an extensive network of access roads. The measures adopted helped in the more efficient use of the limited capacity of the head sections of the front railroads.*

*The capabilities of the rail transport were fully utilized also in the course of the operation. However, due to the low rate of rebuilding the railroads in the zone of the former tactical enemy defensive zone, its role in supplying the troops declined. From the very first days of the offensive virtually the entire volume of material shipments from the head rail stations to the troops was handled by the front, army and troop motor vehicle and cart transport.*

*In the course of the Belorussian Operation motor transport played a major role in delivering materiel. As of 23 June, the First Baltic Front had 2,100 transport vehicles with a total load capacity of 4,500 tons, the Third Belorussian Front had 2,253 (6,500 tons), the Second Belorussian had 2,700 (5,250 tons) and the First Belorussian had 3,697 (9,600 tons).<sup>8</sup> Of this quantity around 70-75 percent of the vehicles were in the front motor transport formations and transport units and up to 25-30 percent in the army ones. The divisions of all the fronts each had 40-50 motor vehicles with a total carrying capacity of 60-70 tons.*

*The fronts carried out an entire range of measures to increase the combat and technical readiness of the motor transport formations, units and subunits. As a result, by the start of the offensive, the technical operational readiness of the front and army motor transport units had been brought up to 92-95 percent.<sup>9</sup>*

The motor transport of all levels of the rear services in the course of the operation operated under a heavy strain. The average daily run surpassed the planned indicator (200 km) by 1.5-2-fold. Many motor transport subunits each day traveled 400-500 km and more. The highly efficient operation of motor transport was achieved primarily by firm centralized command of the motor transport formations and units directly by the deputy front commanders for the rear services over the entire operation. In accord with their instructions, the rear staffs and the motor vehicle headquarters of the fronts planned and clearly organized the carrying out of motor vehicle shipments for all types of materiel. The turning over of the motor vehicle units and subunits to the individual services and branches of troops (decentralization) was not permitted even temporarily.

*The consistent observance of the principle of the centralized use of motor transport under the complex, dynamic rear operational situation was one of the characteristic features in the rear support for the operation and this to a large degree contributed to the prompt handling of the large amount of emergency shipments.* Of great importance was the constant concern for the drivers, the organizing of their meals and rest, the reducing of the transport stoppages for loading and unloading operations, reliable maintenance and prompt fueling of the vehicles underway. For these purposes on the front military roads approximately every 100-120 km they set up stations for rest, meals, medical aid, maintenance and fueling while every 200-250 km there were roadside hotels and bathhouses with showers and decontamination chambers.

Due to the intense work carried out by all the personnel of the motor transport formations and units, the advancing troops in the course of the operation were supplied with materiel basically continuously. During July and August the front and army transport carried more than 1 million tons of various freight.<sup>10</sup>

*Valuable experience was also gained in organizing transport support.* Starting in April 1944, great work was carried out in the fronts to develop the network and increase the capacity of the railroads as well as to repair and improve the paved and dirt roads. On all the sectors they built low-water and high-water back-up bridges and established significant supplies of lumber, metal structural elements and other reconstruction materials. By the start of the offensive, the basic railroad sections and military roads had been brought virtually up to the troop battle formations while the railroad and road troops had been moved up to the head sections and were made ready to immediately undertake reconstruction work.

In preparing for the operation a good deal of attention was given to planning the reconstruction of the railroad sections. This was of particularly important significance for the First Belorussian Front as in the zone of its advance there were two frontal railroad sections. A short double-track section of Kalinkovichi, Luninets, Zhabinka, Brest (458 km) with a large number of man-made structures ran across the floodplain of the Pripyat River. Another, longer section of Zhlobin, Bobruysk, Osipovichi, Baranovichi, Zhabinka, Brest (650 km) had significantly fewer bridges and culverts. Moreover, in parallel to this section ran a highway and this made it possible to successfully carry out reconstruction work. The front's military council, proceeding from an analysis of the nature and scope of the destruction, took a decision to rebuild the

longer railroad section. The soundness of this decision in the course of the operation was confirmed. However, serious miscalculations were made in the process of rebuilding the railroads during the operation.

Both on the First Belorussian and on the other fronts, they planned to rebuild the railroad sections in the former tactical enemy defensive zone at a rate of 5-6 km a day. Actually due to the extremely heavy destruction in this zone (the enemy destroyed not only the superstructure but also the embankment), the railroads were rebuilt only at a rate of 1-1.5 km a day. As a result, the distance of the supply depots from the advancing troops increased sharply. For example, on the First Belorussian Front, the Zhlobin, Bobruysk section (63 km) was rebuilt and supply trains ran over it only on 15 July while the troops by that time had already advanced 350-400 km.<sup>11</sup>

The rate of rebuilding the railroads was significantly increased when the troops reached the operational open areas as the hurriedly retreating enemy was unable to carry out mass destruction. This was also aided by the effective carrying out of special operational measures to protect the railroads from destruction. Thus, upon an order from the commanders of the fronts, the aviation, the mobile tank and cavalry-mechanized groups, the paratroopers and partisan detachments destroyed the enemy demolition teams and track wreckers, they captured undestroyed bridges, depots, railroad stations and junctions. In the area of the First Belorussian Front, for example, the enemy "Crimp" track-wrecking machine was destroyed by air strikes 25 km from the forward edge, while on the Third Belorussian Front the tank troops captured a similar track-wrecking machine 34 km from the forward edge.<sup>12</sup>

In mid-July the fronts were reinforced by railroad troops as follows: the First Belorussian by 3 railroad brigades (1st, 15th and 29th), the Third and Second Belorussian received one brigade each (23d and 8th). For accelerating the moving up of the arrived railroad units to the work areas, front motor transport was assigned to them and above-norm fuel limits were allocated.

With the arrival of the additional railroad brigades and with the organizing of reconstruction work on a broad front, the pace of rebuilding the railroads increased sharply (to 25-30 km a day). By mid-August they were in operation as far as Shyauiyay, Belostok, Warsaw, Deblin. The delivery of materiel to the fronts had fundamentally improved and supplies for the troops began to be gradually replenished.

The road troops the number of which on the fronts was very significant, in the course of the operation, carried out a large amount of work. For example, on the First Belorussian Front for rebuilding and operating the military roads (VAD) they had at work 50 road construction battalions (odsb), 17 bridge building battalions (onsb), 18 road maintenance battalions (odeb), 3 military road headquarters (with 5-6 detachments in each) and 23 separate cart-transport companies. In the rear of the armies there were 3 or 4 separate battalions (1-2 odsb, 1 omsb and 1 odeb) and up to 3 separate cart-transport companies.<sup>13</sup> On each front these forces rebuilt and operated 2 or 3 front VAD and 1-2 army VAD. As a total during the operation, the road troops of the four fronts prepared 37,083 km of military roads, they laid 400 km of wood-surface roads and built and rebuilt 3,598 bridges.

Reconstruction work on the VAD was carried out on a broad front. Here the head road subunits and units (the first echelon of the road troops) moved up directly behind the advancing first echelon troops and in cooperation with the engineer units they carried out technical reconnaissance, mine clearing and brief reconstruction of the roads. After the head units came the basic forces (second echelon) of the road troops. They completed the rebuilding of the destroyed road facilities and organized normal operation of the VAD, in collaborating closely with the engineer troops and widely using the aid of the local population.

*In organizing medical support* great attention was given to readying all levels of the medical service. In May and the first half of June, the medical-ambulance battalions of the formations and army hospitals were cleared as much as possible of wounded, they were replenished with personnel and medical supplies while the army hospital bases were brought closer to the troops and located 15-25 km from the forward edge. Around 30 percent of the army hospitals were assigned to the reserve for moving up behind the advancing troops.

The hospital bases of the fronts in the jump-off position were set up along the evacuation routes in two or three echelons. The first (forward) echelons of the GBF [front hospital base] were located in the army rear areas some 30-40 km from the front line, the second (main ones) were 80-100 km and the third (rear) ones were 150-250 km.<sup>14</sup>

More than 80 percent of the total number of field and evacuation hospitals were included in the first and second echelons of the GBF. In each GBF echelon, a portion of the hospitals (up to 10-15 percent) was put in the reserve. The reserve hospitals were concentrated chiefly close to the forward GBF echelons. In the Third Belorussian Front, for example, the main reserve of medical facilities with 5,500 beds was located in the area of Liozno, Gusino, Smolensk. Here also was located the reserve of the front ambulance transport on which they planned to move up the reserve hospitals behind the advancing troops.

Due to the bad epidemiological situation in the rear areas and on the liberated territory a complete range of antiepidemic measures was carried out to eliminate the loci of typhus and prevent mass illness among the personnel. In the troops and at the dumps monthly supplies of antiepidemic agents were established and mobile antiepidemic facilities and infectious hospitals were put into the reserve. Prior to the offensive all the personnel of the troops and rear services underwent full personal cleansing with a change of underwear and disinfecting of clothing.

By 23 June, the medical units and facilities of the fronts and armies were manned up with physicians, middle-level and junior medical personnel to 90-100 percent of the TOE. Each of the fronts had from 67 to 207 mobile field hospitals and 59-130 evacuation hospitals with a total capacity of from 60,000 to 124,000 beds.<sup>15</sup>

The presence of such a number of medical units and facilities made it possible to organize steady medical support for the troops in all stages of the operation. However, as a consequence of the limited capacity of the railroads, the maneuvering of the medical facilities from the rear was significantly impeded.

The moving up of the army and front hospitals behind the advancing troops was basically carried out motor transport. For example, for establishing the forward hospital base in the area of Orsha (Third Belorussian Front) the front's chief of the rear services assigned some 317 motor vehicles.<sup>16</sup>

The moving of the forward front hospital bases closer to the troops was also carried out on the other fronts (see the diagram). This helped to promptly free the army hospitals and move them forward behind the advancing troops.

In the course of the operation the experience of setting up interarmy hospital bases proved completely effective. These were established from the reserve army (partially) and front hospitals for the support, as a rule, of two adjacent armies. Thus, sick and wounded were evacuated to the interarmy hospital base at Orsha from the 11th Guards Army and 31st Army and to the one in the area of Senno from the 39th and 5th Armies.

For evacuating the sick and wounded from the regimental and divisional medical stations, from the army and forward front hospital bases, passing motor vehical transports were also widely used in addition to the special ambulance transport. The evacuation of sick and wounded from the mobile and cavalry-mechanized groups was basically carried out by ambulance aviation. The evacuation movements between the echelons of the front hospital bases were carried out by military ambulance squads and by temporary military medical trains. For example, on the First Belorussian Front, the squads operated successfully on the railroad sections of Saltanovka, Klintsy; Saltanovka, Gomel; Zherd, Kalinkovich; Zherd, Rechitsa, and so forth.

Prompt evacuation from the battlefield and skilled treatment at the hospital bases made it possible to return 50 percent of the sick and wounded to battle during the operation (not counting those returned to battle by the medical facilities of the Center).<sup>17</sup>

*The experience of organizing command and control of the rear services in the Belorussian Operation convincingly confirmed the stability and flexibility of the centralized structure established during the first period of the war for the command and control bodies headed by the deputy commanders for the rear services.* During the entire operation, the deputy front commanders and chiefs of the rear services Lt Gen D. I. Andreyev (First Baltic Front), Lt Gen Intend Serv V. P. Vinogradov (Third Belorussian Front), Lt Gen Intend Serv N. A. Naydenov (Second Belorussian Front) and Lt Gen Intend Serv N. A. Antipenko (First Belorussian Front) firmly carried out the plans for the rear support of the troops. Their instructions and orders on organizing logistical support, transport and evacuation, the placing and moving of the rear units and facilities, security and defense, procurement and use of local resources, command, control and communications of the rear services were obligatory for all the chiefs of the branches of troops and special services of the fronts and armies.

The principle of strict one-man management in the leadership of the rear services with full responsibility for the deputy commanders for the rear services was a characteristic feature in the work of the rear bodies and one of the decisive factors for the uninterrupted supply of the troops in the difficult operational and rear situation. The deputy commanders for the rear services

and their staffs carried out all the work related to supplying the troops in the operation in close contact with the all-arms staffs of the fronts and armies. This substantially increased the effectiveness of control and made it possible for the rear bodies to promptly prepare and execute a flexible maneuver with the resources in accord with the operational situation.

The command and control of the rear services during the preparation for and in the course of the operation were carried out from the rear control posts which were set up 20-25 km from the command post. On all the fronts operational command groups were established and one of these was constantly at the command post while the others directed the supply of the troops fighting on separate sectors or as part of the mobile groups. On the First Belorussian Front, an operations group was established for controlling the movement of operational and supply trains at the railroad junction of Novo-Belitsa. For increasing the effectiveness of leadership, liaison officers, including on P0-2 aircraft, were systematically sent to the troops and to the major rear installations.

In the process of command and control the rear staffs and services, under the direct leadership of the deputy commanders for the rear services worked out directives (orders) for the rear services, organizational plans for the rear services, as well as orders and summaries for the rear services. In addition to the general plans, the fronts also worked out individual plans for the rear support of the mobile groups. For example, the rear staff of the First Belorussian Front worked out a detailed "Plan for Logistical, Medical and Veterinary Support for the Cavalry-Mechanized Group of Gen I. A. Pliyev."<sup>18</sup> It established the amounts of supplies in the troops of the group and in the reserve at the railhead of Ostankinovichi and provided for the strengthening of the rear services of the mobile group with a motor vehicle battalion with supplies of fuel and ammunition, a surgical hospital, medical personnel and four road battalions (2 odsb, an omsb and an odeb). For directing the rear support of the cavalry-mechanized group, the plan provided for the establishing of an operations headquarters group consisting of officers from the rear staff, artillery supply, motor vehicle, road and quartermaster headquarters, the fuel supply section and the veterinary section.

The experience of the Belorussian Operation clearly showed the inseparable link and close dependence of the successful conduct of offensive combat operations upon the steady and uninterrupted operation of the rear services, and primarily upon the prompt delivery of ammunition and fuel to the troops.

In the course of the operation, the rear bodies of the front and armies gained great practical experience in stockpiling supplies in the troops and at the depots in limited times, in carrying out the flexible maneuvering of the rear units and facilities, in rebuilding the railroads and motor roads under the conditions of wooded-swampy terrain, organizing the delivery of materiel a great distance away from the supply depots, and uninterrupted supply of the mobile groups in the course of their rapid advance in the operational depth. The experience gained in the Belorussian Operation in organizing the rear support of the troops was widely employed in the concluding operations of the Great Patriotic War. It has largely not lost its pertinence under present-day conditions as well.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Tyl Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyno 1941-1945 gg." [The Rear Services of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1977, p 136.
- 2 "Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii" [The Liberation of Belorussia], Moscow, Nauka, 1974, p 669.
- 3 Ibid., pp 678-679.
- 4 "Tyl Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh..." p 136.
- 5 VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 8, 1974, p 25.
- 6 "Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii," p 670.
- 7 VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 8, 1974, p 27.
- 8 Ibid., No 6, 1964, p 44.
- 9 "Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii," p 675.
- 10 TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 67, inv. 198026, file 51, sheets 38-41.
- 11 "Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii," p 672.
- 12 TsAMO, folio 241, inv. 13834, file 76, sheets 186-187.
- 13 Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2356, file 165, sheets 153-154.
- 14 "Tyl Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh..." p 138.
- 15 VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No 8, 1974, p 26.
- 16 "Osvobozhdeniye Belorussii," p 718.
- 17 N. A. Antipenko, "Na glavnom napravlenii" [On the Main Sector], Moscow, Nauka, 1967, p 172.
- 18 TsAMO, folio 233, inv. 2356, file 165, sheets 158-160.

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## SOVIET VIEW OF ALLIED LANDING IN NORMANDY PRESENTED

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[Article by Candidate of Historical Sciences, Docent, Capt 1st Rank A. Usikov and Candidate of Naval Sciences, Capt 1st Rank V. Shevchenko: "The Normandy Landing Operation"]

[Text] Forty years ago, on 6 June 1944, the important news traveled quickly around the entire world, the Anglo-American troops had begun a landing in Northern France thereby marking a beginning to the opening of a second front in Europe. On that day, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in the European Theater, Gen D. Eisenhower, in speaking in London over the radio and making an appeal to Europe and the entire world, announced: "The landing is a part of a coordinated plan for liberating Europe together with our Russian Allies." A little later the British Prime Minister W. Churchill made a special announcement in the House of Commons. "I should also inform the House," he said, "that during the night and early hours of this morning a landing was made by the first series of major landing forces on the European coast."<sup>1</sup>

In Moscow, a press conference was held at the English Military Mission in the USSR. The head of the British Military Mission, Lt Gen B. Barrows, and the head of the U.S. Military Mission, Maj Gen D. Dean, made the statement: "With a feeling of profound emotion, we, the heads of the British and American Military Missions, welcome the arrival of this moment when we can say that our main forces have joined the Red Army on the path to a final victory."<sup>2</sup>

Having accepted official obligations to open a second front in Europe in 1942, the Allies under various pretexts for a long time deferred its opening portraying one or another operation in the secondary theaters of war as this. At the same time, when fierce battles were being waged on the Soviet-German Front, the Anglo-American armed forces successively captured strategically and economically important areas in various parts of the world. During the autumn of 1942, during the period of the Battle for Stalingrad, the Allies landed in North Africa in order to strengthen their positions in the Mediterranean and Near East; in July 1943, at the peak of the battle on the Kursk Salient, they undertook a landing in Sicily and then in the south of Italy.

Having received the next refusal by the Western powers to open a second front in 1943, the head of the Soviet government, I. V. Stalin, in a message to W. Churchill of 24 June 1943, drew the attention of the Allies to the fact that their decision was undermining our confidence in them. Here he strictly emphasized: "It must not be forgotten that it is a question of preserving millions of lives in the occupied areas of Western Europe and Russia and reducing the colossal sacrifices of the Soviet armies, in comparison with which the losses of the Anglo-American troops are a small amount."<sup>3</sup> During all these years, the Soviet-German Front was the main front of World War II.

By the summer of 1944, the military-political situation in Western Europe as throughout the world was determined by the course of military operations on the Soviet-German Front. In the winter and spring of 1944, the Soviet Armed Forces routed the large flank groupings of Nazi troops around Leningrad and Novgorod, in Karelia, the Ukraine and Crimea. Favorable conditions were established for attacking in Belorussia. Realizing that a powerful offensive by the Soviet troops was coming in the East, the Nazi Command continued to hold the basic mass of the armed forces here and additionally shifted the best formations here from the territory of Germany and the occupied countries.

By June 1944, there were on the Soviet-German Front 179 divisions and brigades of Nazi Germany, 49 divisions and 18 brigades of its allies, a portion of the forces of the 20th German Mountain Army, 3 air forces and a naval grouping in the North and on the Baltic and Black Seas. These forces had 4.3 million men, 59,000 guns and mortars, 7,800 tanks and assault guns, as well as 3,200 combat aircraft. At that time in the West, in France, Belgium and the Netherlands there were just 58 Nazi divisions and these were supported by the 3d Air Fleet which numbered 160 battleworthy aircraft.<sup>4</sup>

As a whole, as a result of the heroic struggle by the Soviet people and the defeats suffered by the Nazi troops on the Soviet-German Front, a favorable situation was established for an Allied landing in Normandy.

The landing operation by the American-English troops in Northern France was preceded by extensive preparations. The first actual plans for an invasion of the European continent across the English Channel were worked out by the Allies in May 1943 at the Washington Conference of U.S. and English Leaders while the first version of the plan was reviewed in August in Quebec.

The final decision for the Allied landing was taken at the Tehran Conference of the Three Great Powers in November-December 1943. At it I. V. Stalin stated that the Soviet troops would undertake an offensive approximately at the same time for the purpose of preventing the shifting of German forces from the Eastern Front to the Western.<sup>5</sup> As has been pointed out by the English bourgeois historian C. Wilmot, "the numerous doubts in the minds of the American and English chiefs of staff were eliminated only after the Soviet delegation at the Tehran Conference assured the Allies that the Soviet Army's offensive would be timed to its [the landing] carrying out."<sup>6</sup>

For preparing and conducting the operation, at the end of 1943, a Joint Supreme Command of Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe was set up under the Joint Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff Committee. The American Gen D. Eisenhower was

appointed the supreme commander-in-chief, the English Chief Air Mar A. Tedder was to be his deputy, the American Gen B. Smith was to be the chief of staff, the English Gen B. Montgomery was to be the commander of the Ground Forces, the English Chief Air Mar T. Lee-Mallory was to be the air forces' commander and the English Adm B. Ramsey the commander of the navy.

The invasion of France was to be carried out by conducting a strategic offensive operation under the code name Overlord involving all of the armed services. The overall plan envisaged the landing of major naval and airborne forces on the coast of the Baie de la Seine over a length of around 80 km and the establishing by the 20th day of a beachhead 100 km along the front and 100-110 km in depth. Here they subsequently intended to assemble the forces needed to conduct further offensive operations in Northern France.<sup>7</sup>

For capturing a strategic beachhead and for conducting the subsequent offensive, the Allies had concentrated on the British Isles some 39 divisions, 12 separate brigades, 12 commando and ranger detachments as well as major naval and air forces. The Allied ground forces assigned for participating in the operation were combined into the 21st Army Group (American 1st, English 2d and Canadian 1st), a total of 32 divisions and 12 separate brigades. The expeditionary forces also included strong air force groupings (around 11,000 combat aircraft, more than 2,300 transports and around 2,600 gliders) and naval forces (around 7,000 combat ships and vessels of all types including 4,126 landing vessels and craft). The total size of the expeditionary forces was over 2,876,000 men. The grouping included 6,000 tanks and SAU and 15,000 guns and mortars. Thus, by the start of the Normandy Operation the Allies had over the enemy a superiority of 3-fold in personnel and tanks and more than 60-fold in aircraft. They commanded complete superiority at sea.<sup>8</sup>

The basic German troop grouping opposing the Allied landing in Western Europe was the Army Group B (commander, Field Mar E. Rommel) consisting of the 7th and 15th Armies and the LXXXVIII Separate Army Corp. This was positioned on the territory of the Netherlands, Belgium and Northern France. Some 38 divisions of this grouping, including 3 tank ones, were defending a coast more than 1,300 km long. The battleworthiness of these divisions was significantly lower than in similar formations on the Soviet-German Front. In their majority they were manned by older personnel who were also only limitedly fit for military service. Of the 58 formations, 33 were judged as suitable only for passive defense. These divisions were almost or completely without transport and had no mobility at all.<sup>9</sup>

The enemy's antilanding defenses were not complete. The Nazi Command had strengthened the ports most strongly, particularly in the Pas de Calais, where the Allied landing was considered most probable. In the Baie de la Seine, where the Allies landed, the antilanding defenses were significantly weaker. Here, the 80-km section of the coastline from Cabourg to the base of the Contentin Peninsula was defended by the LXXXIV Army Corps consisting of 2 divisions.

The Naval Grouping West (commander, Adm T. Kranke) with the mission of conducting antilanding defense included 3 destroyers, 6 torpedo boats, 116 patrol boats, 309 minesweepers, 34 torpedo launches, 42 artillery barges and 49 submarines.<sup>10</sup> A significant portion of these forces was in bases on the Atlantic

Coast of France while the remainder were in the bases of the English Channel and Pas de Calais. The scattering of the forces over widely separated bases and their weak attack might could not have a substantial combat effect on the landing forces.

The widely advertised invulnerability of the "Atlantic Rampart" was false. According to the evidence of the Commander-in-Chief of the West, Field Mar G. Rundstedt, the "Atlantic Rampart" was an illusion conceived to confuse both the German people and the enemy. "It always irritated me," he said, "when I read the legend about the invincible defense. It was absurd to call it a rampart."<sup>11</sup> As a whole, the plan for defensive engineer works in the zone of the 15th Army was only 68 percent complete and just 18 percent in the zone of the 7th Army.<sup>12</sup>

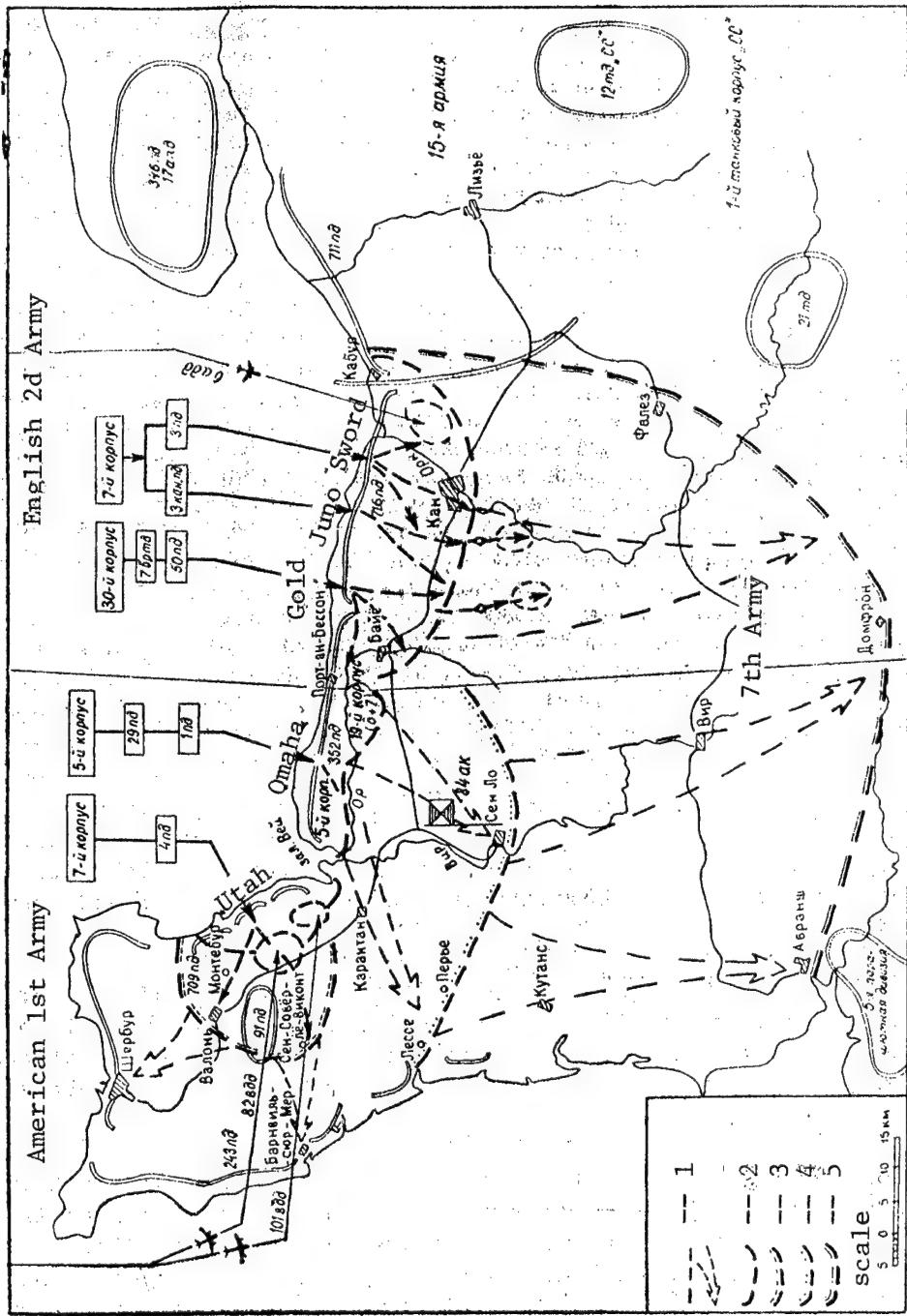
The preparations of the Allied troops for the operation were carried out in a peaceful situation, without enemy opposition. Here chief attention was given to establishing a predominant superiority in men and equipment, to ensuring supremacy at sea and in the air and to stockpiling supplies of materiel. Due to the extensive system of camouflaging, deception and consideration of meteorological conditions, the Allies succeeded in concealing the start and landing area of their troops. The entire process of preparing and conducting the operation was facilitated by the fact that the Allies from intercepting the radio traffic between the Command West and the OKW had precise information on the regrouping of the Nazi troops and the axis of the planned counterstrikes.

The question of the area and time of the landing was a matter of protracted and careful discussion. For the landing of the expeditionary forces, the coast of the Baie de la Seine was chosen between the ports of Le Havre and Cherbourg. In this area the enemy had significantly weakened its defenses, while strengthening them in the area of the Pas de Calais, where the Nazi leadership considered the landing to be most probable. For the purposes of security, the crossing of the force at sea was to be carried out on a moonlit night, without lights, while at dawn the landing would be during the low tide which would facilitate the detection of the antilanding obstacles in the water and their subsequent destruction.

For maintaining a rapid landing rate, the American-English Command gave great importance to the struggle on the lines of communications where the main thing was felt to be the supporting of their sea movements and the aborting of enemy movements over the French road network. In this struggle the basic role was assigned to the aviation.

Air force operations were planned in four stages: preliminary, preparatory, during the direct landing of the troops and in carrying out missions on the coast. Artillery softening up was to start 2 hours before the landing. For carrying out this they had assigned 5 detachments of artillery support ships each including 1-2 battleships, 4-8 cruisers and up to 11 destroyers. They also proposed using artillery barges and launches with rocket weapons.

At the end of April 1944, the Allied aviation had begun to destroy the basic enemy installations on the territory of France. At the end of May, the entire enormous mass of prepared men and equipment went into motion. The transports



Plan of the Landing and Operations of the Amphibious Force

- Key:
- 1-Direction of advance
  - 2-Boundary reached by end of D-day
  - 3-By end of D+2
  - 4-The V and XIX Corps after D+7
  - 5-By the end of D+20

which left various ports of England carrying some 287,000 men of the expeditionary forces by the end of 5 June had arrived in the staging area to the southwest of the Isle of Wight. Organized here into landing detachments, they traveled in 10 cleared channels to the Baie de la Seine.<sup>13</sup>

Immediate air preparations commenced 8 hours prior to the landing at 2235 hours on 5 June. Some 3 hours later (at 0130 hours on 6 June), they began dropping the airborne divisions including the 82d and 101st American and the 6th English. Some 1,662 aircraft and 512 gliders of American aviation and 733 aircraft and 335 gliders of the Royal Air Force were involved in it. The units of the 82d Airborne Division landed to the west of Sainte Mère Eglise. Without encountering strong resistance, they quickly occupied it. The 101st Airborne Division landed to the north of Contentin. It was scattered over a large area and suffered losses in personnel and weapons in the landing. But the force succeeded in digging in at a number of points, occupying the crossings on the Douvres River and then linking up with the units of the amphibious force. The 6th Airborne Division landed to the northeast of Caen. Having encountered weak resistance from the Nazis, the airborne troops captured several crossings over the Orne River where they came under attacks by their own aviation.<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the artillery softening up and the massed Allied air strikes, the defenses of the Nazi troops on the coast were significantly neutralized. At 0630 hours in the American zone and an hour later in the English zone, the forward detachments of the amphibious landing landed on the coast. The achieved surprise, the numerical superiority over the enemy, the massed artillery fire and the unchallenged supremacy in the air made it possible for the troops to land on the coast under conditions of insignificant resistance from the defending troops. By the end of 6 June, the Allied troops had established three beachheads from 2 to 9 km deep.

The success of the expeditionary forces in the first stages of the operation was largely predetermined by the energetic air operations. Just from 1 April through 5 June, the aviation had made more than 200,000 aircraft sorties, it had dropped around 195,000 bombs,<sup>15</sup> and had destroyed or knocked out all the bridges over the Seine between Rouen and Paris, it had destroyed 82 percent of the radars and damaged a significant number of rail junctions and other installations.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the Resistance fighters intensified the sabotage on the railroads. As a result, by the start of the operation, rail movements in Northern France had declined from 100 to 25 trains a day.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the fact that the balance of forces on the beachhead was in favor of the American-English forces and the enemy put up weak resistance, the advance of the American troops to the Contentin Peninsula for capturing Cherbourg and the English troops toward Caen went slowly. The even distribution of forces between the main and auxiliary sectors led to a forcing out of the enemy. Up to 30 June, the Allies had succeeded in linking up the three initially captured beachheads into one common one some 100 km wide and 20-40 km deep. Here the average rate of advance was very low and did not exceed 1-1.5 km a day.

By the start of July, the troops of the American 1st Army, the English 2d Army and a portion of the forces of the Canadian 1st Army (a total of 25 divisions) had been moved to the beachhead. They were opposed by 18 German divisions which

had suffered great casualties in the previous battles. The main reason which prevented the reinforcing of the Wehrmacht troops in the West was the great offensive undertaken by the Soviet Armed Forces in Belorussia in June. "The Soviets," wrote the well-known American diplomat C. Bohlen, "honestly carried out their duties in accord with the agreement and started their offensive when it was of real aid to the Allies."<sup>18</sup>

In crossing the enemy defenses, the Allied troops in July made slow progress. The 1st American Army had advanced 10-15 km to the south. The basic efforts of the English 2d Army as before continued to be concentrated in the capturing of the city of Caen. By 25 July, the Allies had reached the line of St. Lo, Caumont, Caen. The total width of the captured beachhead was 100 km and the depth 50 km. The Allied Command had concentrated 32 divisions here, including 23 infantry, 1 airborne and 8 armored (17 American divisions, 10 English and 5 Canadian). In the units and formations on the beachhead, there were around 2,500 tanks. The air forces numbered around 11,000 aircraft. With this, the Normandy Landing Operation was completed and the Anglo-American Command began preparations for the subsequent offensive.

Thus, the Normandy Operation in being the largest amphibious operation of World War II, meant the opening of a second front in Western Europe. Regardless of the fact that the landing of the Allied troops in Normandy was made 2 years later than the initially planned time, this very fact was of great political and military-strategic significance. As a result of the powerful attack from the east and the west, "Germany was caught in a vise between two fronts...the army could not withstand the joint blows of the Red Army and Allied troops."<sup>19</sup>

However, in June 1944, in the plan for the general conduct for the war, the second front could not have and did not have that importance which it would have assumed in 1942 or 1943. The main military-political goals of crushing fascism more rapidly and shortening the war were sacrificed to the global policy of imperialism aimed chiefly at the postwar future. Only when it was clear that the Soviet Union by its own forces was capable of defeating Nazi Germany and liberating the European countries, including France and Northern Italy, of the Nazi yoke and victoriously conclude the war, the second front was then opened..

In paying proper due to this generally successful operation, it is essential to point out that it was conducted under exceptionally favorable conditions created primarily by the victories of the Soviet Army. And after the Allied landing in France, the Soviet-German Front continued to consume virtually all the Wehrmacht reserves. On 1 July, according to German data, here there were 2,160,000 servicemen of the German ground forces while on the Western European and Italian Fronts, just 892,000, or nearly 2.5-fold less.<sup>20</sup> And even in this most effective period for the U.S. and English armies, the Soviet troops caused the enemy significantly greater losses than the Allies. The total Wehrmacht losses with the start of combat in Normandy up to the end of September 1944 were 460,000 men, less than in the Belorussian Operation alone. In June-December 1944, the enemy lost 2.5-fold fewer troops on the Western European Front than over the same time on the Soviet-German Front.

As a whole, the Normandy Operation was characterized by: careful and thorough preparation of the men and equipment; by high technical equipping of the landing troops, particularly with special landing equipment; by the able conduct of numerous measures related to surprise and deception; by the broad involvement of ships and aviation for artillery and air softening up for the landing and supporting the landing troops on the shore; by the landing of large airborne forces in the interests of the amphibious landing and by their carrying out of not only tactical but also operational tasks; by the involving of major naval and air forces for a secure operational cover and air defense for the landing forces; by a sound organization of the sea movements across the English Channel.

The system of coalition leadership, regardless of the differences between the United States and England over a number of operational-strategic and military-political questions, basically ensured the carrying out of a larger part of the missions.

The planning of the landing operation was characterized by a careful and thorough elaboration of all questions involving the combat activities of the troops and their support. The plan clearly outlined the procedure for the troops' arrival at the embarkation points for the transports, the movement of the ships and landing vessels across the strait, the particular features of artillery and air softening up, the areas and time of landing for the formations, units and subunits of the ground and airborne troops, the axes of operations and the lines to be reached by the troops in capturing and widening the beachhead and so forth.

The American-English Command gave a very important place to achieving surprise in the operation. For this purpose the carrying out of the preparatory measures was carefully concealed, the enemy radars were destroyed, spurious concentrations of men and equipment were carried out, powerful air strikes were made in the sectors where a landing was not envisaged and other forms of deception were employed. As a result of these measures, the American-English Command succeeded in not only confusing the enemy on the place and scale of the landing but also for a significant period of time to keep the enemy firmly convinced that the main strike would come across Pas de Calais.

We should also note the preparation of a large amount of landing equipment which ensured the landing of the troops on an unequipped beach as well as the special equipping and packing of the combat gear and food for transporting and unloading. The problem of supplying the troops with everything necessary after the landing was solved by building two man-made ports as well as by laying gasoline lines across the bottom of the strait.

A new phenomenon in the conducting of the landing operations by the Allies was the significant aid given to their forces by the Resistance Movement. Even before the landing of the Allied troops, the arms attachments of the resistance and the insurgent workers had liberated many villages and population points and had expelled the Nazis from entire areas. Just in the landing area the forces of the patriots had liberated 42 towns and hundreds of villages. Entire departments were liberated by their own forces.<sup>21</sup> According to reports of the occupation authorities, merely during the period from 6 June through 4 July 1944, members of the Resistance had destroyed 7,900 Nazis.<sup>22</sup> But the command of the

Allied troops feared the broadening of actions by the patriots and disliked the development of the mass people's liberation movement into an armed insurrection and undertook measures aimed at curtailing this.

The American-English troops had every opportunity to complete the fight to widen the bridgehead in a shorter period of time, to defeat the German troops in Normandy and develop a rapid drive deep into France. However, these opportunities were not used and the battles in Normandy assumed a drawn-out nature. Extreme slowness was also inherent to the subsequent combat operations of the American-English troops.

Regardless of the general superiority in men and weapons, the Allied Command was unable to create strong assault groupings on the beachhead for operations on the decisive sectors and achieve a rapid breakthrough deep into the enemy defenses. Even under the conditions of the complete superiority of Allied aviation, the Nazi Command succeeded in bringing up certain forces to the beachheads from other sectors and parry the attacks by the Allied troops.

In bourgeois historiography, extensive literature has been devoted to the history of the second front and the Normandy Operation. In a majority of the historical works, articles and official publications, the place and role of this operation and its influence on the course and outcome of World War II are intentionally exaggerated. But, as was rightly pointed out by one of the English military historians, "for a representative of the West it would be prudent to assess the scale of the struggle and realize that the war was won there (on the Soviet-German Front.--Editors), and not on the African deserts, in Italy or Normandy, no matter what praise the successes of the Allies in these theaters is merited."<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet people pay proper respect to the role of the Allied troops and the Resistance Movement in accelerating the defeat of Nazi Germany. At that time, the Soviet government highly regarded the military efforts of the American, English and Canadian soldiers and officers, the men of the other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition and the Resistance fighters, having recognized the contribution of the most outstanding of them to the joint struggle against fascism by the awarding of Soviet orders and medals.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> PRAVDA, 7 June 1944.

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<sup>3</sup> "Perepiska Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR s prezidentami SShA i prem'yer-ministrami Velikobritanii vo vremya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941-1945 gg." [Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers With the U.S. Presidents and British Prime Ministers During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], 2d Edition, Moscow, Politizdat, Vol 2, 1976, p 76.

<sup>4</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 9, 1978, pp 19, 236-237.

- <sup>5</sup> See: P. A. Zhilin, A. S. Yakushevskiy and Ye. N. Kal'kov, "Kritika osnovnykh kontseptsiy burzhuaznoy istoriografii vtoroy mirovoy voyny" [Critique of the Basic Concepts of Bourgeois Historiography of World War II], Moscow, Nauka, 1983, p 175.
- <sup>6</sup> C. Wilmot, "The Struggle for Europe," London, 1974, p 160.
- <sup>7</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...," Vol 9, p 240.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., Vol 12, 1982, p 229; Vol 9, p 243.
- <sup>9</sup> O. Groehler, "Krieg im Westen," Berlin, 1968, p 162.
- <sup>10</sup> "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 5, 1978, p 633.
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- <sup>14</sup> "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...," Vol 9, pp 244-245.
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- <sup>16</sup> "D-Day: The Normandy Invasion in Retrospect," Lawrence, 1971, pp 68, 70.
- <sup>17</sup> L. I. Ol'shtynskiy, "Vzaimodeystviye armii i flota (po opytu osnovnykh sovmestnykh nastupatel'nykh operatsii vtoroy mirovoy voyny)" [Cooperation of the Army and Navy (From the Experience of the Basic Joint Offensive Operations of World War II)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1983, p 119.
- <sup>18</sup> C. Bohlen, "The Transformation of American Foreign Policy," New York, 1969, p 26.
- <sup>19</sup> I. V. Stalin, "O Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynе Sovetskogo Soyuza" [On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union], Moscow, Politizdat, 1953, p 157.
- <sup>20</sup> B. Müller-Hillebrand, "Das Heer 1933-1945," Frankfurt a/M., 1969, Vol 3, p 174.
- <sup>21</sup> V. Bleier, et al., "Germaniya vo vtoroy mirovoy voynе (1939-1945)" [Germany in World War II (1939-1945)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1971, p 348.
- <sup>22</sup> "Le Parti communiste francais dans la Resistance," Paris, 1967, p 285.
- <sup>23</sup> R. Brett-Smith, "Hitler's Generals," London, 1976, p 279.

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## WESTERN TACTICS IN AIR ATTACKS ON AIRFIELDS REVIEWED

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[Article by Maj Gen Avn V. Maksimov: "Strikes Against Airfields (From the Materials of the Foreign Press)"]

[Text] In the local wars initiated by imperialism since the end of World War II, one of the basic methods of combating the aviation of the opposing side and winning air supremacy has been strikes against airfields.

*In the Korean war (1950-1953), U.S. aviation, having a great superiority (1,172 aircraft against 172), began making attacks on airfields. On the fourth day of the war, 29 June 1950, the American B-26 tactical bombers made the first raid as a result of which 36 aircraft were put out of action. In the course of the subsequent strikes against the airfields of the Korean People's Army, the losses of its aviation increased significantly.*

Due to the unstinting aid from the fraternal socialist countries, by the autumn of 1950, the North Korean Air Force and Air Defense Troops had been significantly strengthened. A portion of the jet fighters had been positioned at airfields adjacent to the combat area. The most important installations were covered by antiaircraft weapons batteries. A system of combat command and control had been organized on the basis of the acquisition and guidance radars. The attempts of American aviation to operate against the airfields using the old "range" methods had severe consequences.<sup>1</sup> Thus, on 12 April 1951, 48 B-29 bombers were met by 72 MIG-15 fighters. In the ensuing air combat, the North Korean pilots, regardless of the resistance of the heavy fighter cover, shot down three B-29 and seriously damaged seven others. The antiaircraft artillery fire also became more effective.

In suffering heavy losses, American aviation was forced to switch to attacking the airfields predominantly at night. Under these conditions fighter resistance was reduced as they did not have radar sights and accurate firing by antiaircraft artillery using the visual method was excluded. At the same time, the strategic bombers were unable to form a single battle formation and were deprived of the possibility of making massed strikes. Thus, during the raid of 22 July 1953 against one of the airfields located on the northern frontier of Korea with China, the American B-29 bombers flew in three groups of nine units

in each with an interval of 1-3 minutes between the aircraft and 5-7 minutes between the groups. In bombing from an altitude of 5,000-6,000 m, a carpet of solid coverage was created some 3,800 m long and 600 m wide. One fragmentation of incendiary bomb fell on an area of 3-5 m<sup>2</sup>. The F-80 and F-94 fighters provided a cover with the multitiered screen method.

In having significant numerical superiority in aviation, the American Command did not consider the principle of the economic expenditure of forces. In the opinion of foreign specialists, this is inadmissible in a broad-scale war. For example, an aircraft's flight at a great altitude in the aim of avoiding anti-aircraft fire entails a sharp reduction in bombing precision. However, this shortcoming was compensated for by the number of bombs released, that is, by an excessive increase in forces.

"Blind" bombing from a great altitude from behind the clouds (or in the clouds) at night using navigation systems and radar sights was considered to be a new method in attacking airfields in comparison with those employed during the period during World War II. This method continued to be improved subsequently, it gained independence in line with the appearance of onboard computers and is now an inseparable part in the tactics of the air forces of Western countries.

*During the war in Vietnam*, American aviation also had numerical superiority. A significant portion of it was employed in attacking airfields where the North Vietnamese fighters were based.

At that time, the F-4 and F-105 fighter bombers were the basic attack force of the U.S. Air Force and these could carry an exterior bombload up to 3 tons. For improving maneuverability (for reducing drag) in crossing a zone of anti-aircraft guided missiles, the number of suspended ammunition was reduced. Going beyond the range of the antiaircraft artillery no longer eliminated the threat of attack but rather increased it as the aircraft came into the zone of effective operation of the antiaircraft missile complexes. The salvo bombing from a great altitude using the method employed by the U.S. bombers in Korea was not usable. For this reason, the tactics had to be improved.

The battle formation of the U.S. tactical aircraft began to include one attack group and several support groups. Here the attack group included up to two-thirds of the aircraft assigned for carrying out the mission. As much as possible the aircraft arrived over the target covertly, using intensive jamming against the acquisition radars for concealing the flight. The route to the target was chosen in such a manner that in addition to the onboard navigation equipment it would be possible to use characteristic linear markers (rivers, highways and railroads and so forth). The attack group, as a rule, traveled in a column of flights and the flights were in a wedge formation. Ahead of it (some 2-3 minutes) was the support group the mission of which included sealing off the airfield while to the rear and side at a distance of 3-5 km from the tail wing of the assault group were the cover fighters. Before reaching the zone of antiaircraft fire, the general battle formation broke up into flights which arrived in sequence in the airfield area. At a distance of 5-6 km from the target, the flights reformed into a column of aircraft each of which on the line of starting the combat maneuver executed a "hump" and then attacked the target assigned to it from a dive.

For knocking out the runway, airfield facilities as well as aircraft in shelters, mainly high explosive bombs were employed with a caliber of 450-900 kg and an instantaneous and delayed-action fuzes. In bombing the runway, the run was usually made along its axis or at an angle of 25-30° to it. Most often the attack was made with a single pass. After the attack the aircraft immediately left the target area at a high subsonic speed. The attack was planned in such a manner that at least two or three hits by large high-explosive bombs would be made against each runway. Considering the width of the runway (approximately 50 m) and the probable radial deviation of the bomb (over 100 m), this result was achieved only by an excessively large detail of fighter bombers.

The methods of attacking airfields changed sharply after the appearance of the new F-111A fighter bomber in the U.S. Air Force. Here it was assumed that the capabilities of the aircraft to cross the air defenses would increase sharply in employing two technical innovations: an automatic terrain following system and wings with variable configuration. Proceeding from this, the main thing in the tactics of American aviation was to be individual bomb strikes made under difficult weather conditions and at night against the runways, aircraft in parking areas and fuel dumps.

In attacking the airfields of the North Vietnamese fighters in the course of the Air Operation Linebacker-2 conducted on 18-30 December 1972, the strategic B-52 bombers made a flight at an altitude of 9-10 km without carrying out anti-missile and antifighter maneuvers. The ground air defenses were neutralized ahead of time and the airfields of the fighter interceptors were sealed off by mining them. The airfield-denial groups consisted of F-111A aircraft. On each 12 bombs weighing 340 kg were suspended (this was double the amount in comparison with the F-4 and F-105 fighter bombers) and the airplane traveled to the target the coordinates of which had been fed ahead of time into the in-flight computer. On the route which was up to 800 km long a variable flight profile was used. In the combat area, the aircraft switched to an automatic terrain following mode in order to escape the detection zone of the air defense radar. Upon reaching the point for starting the attack, the bomb drop was made "blind" upon the command of the sight and navigation system.<sup>2</sup> During a night a minimum of two individual raids with an interval of 2-3 hours was made against each airfield.

The main tactical advantage of the individual nighttime raids was seen by the American military specialists in their autonomy (that is, the possibility of abandoning the unproductive combat support), the maintaining of the invulnerability of the individual aircraft against the air defense fire and the achieving of a surprise attack by ensuring complete concealment of the flight to the target.

The "low-altitude" variation of a nighttime airfield attack left as heritage from the war in Vietnam has continued to be improved up to now.

*In the "Six-Day War" in the Near East (5-11 June 1967), the Israeli Command wagered chiefly on the destruction of a maximum number of Arab aircraft at the airfields in a first massed surprise attack. All the available forces of the Israeli Air Force should be involved in it. No aircraft would remain in reserve for carrying out air defense missions or for increasing the effort. Not one alternate*

target was designated to which the Israeli aircraft could be switched in the air with a change in the situation.

The first attack was to be made against airfields where the long-range and medium bombers were stationed and a second one against the airfields where the fighter bombers were based. Lastly, sorties were planned in the aim of destroying the transport aircraft and helicopters. In the absence of resistance in the air, the cover bombers were also to attack ground targets. Here the crew of each aircraft received instructions to leave a portion of the ammunition in reserve for repelling possible attacks by fighter interceptors on the return route.<sup>3</sup>

On 5 June 1967, at 0710 hours, all the combat aircraft of the Israeli Air Force were scrambled. Split into groups, they were to attack 20 airfields out of the 25 designated to be hit. A majority of the groups flew at maximum-low altitude (60 m) above the sea, that is, they executed an outflanking maneuver which had been "rehearsed" during training in the Negev Desert. The run at the target was carried out "from the rear," that is, from the direction of Libya. Nearby airfields in the Sinai were subjected to a frontal attack. A flight at an altitude of 60 m and a speed of 600-800 km per hour ensured maximum late detection of the aircraft by the air defense radars (virtually just in going over to the attack). The bombs were dropped in a volley straight in, with a low dive angle, without additional maneuvers and after a brief climb.

"The practice of the Egyptians to line up the aircraft at open parking areas in even rows made it easy for the Israeli pilots to aim and attack during the run along the parking area."<sup>4</sup> There were no attempts to neutralize the antiaircraft fire since all ammunition was assigned to hit the aircraft on the ground.

In repeated strikes the Israeli bombers attacked all the remaining airfields including on the territory of Syria, Jordan and Iraq (included in the plan of attack). Over the first day of the war, the Israeli Air Force made around 3,000 aircraft sorties and knocked out 374 Arab aircraft. The aggressor's losses were 19 aircraft.<sup>5</sup>

Characteristically, in this armed conflict, new aviation weapons were not employed. A majority of the aircraft on the airfields was destroyed by cannon fire, since with low altitude bombing there was the danger of the attacking aircraft being hit by shrapnel. "The example of prepared, surprise air strikes undoubtedly will incorporate new views in the theory of the conduct of air warfare. It shows how useless it is to merely be concerned with calculating the number of airplanes, tanks and personnel to consider oneself the potential victor,"<sup>6</sup> wrote the journal FLUGWELT.

In the opinion of foreign specialists, after the "Six-Day War" in 1967, at all airfields, including European ones, reinforced concrete shelters (ZBHU) were built for the combat aircraft and these, as a rule, were scattered over the entire area of the airfields. No open parking areas were left.

*The October War in the Near East (6-24 October 1973)* from the very outset was not similar to the "Six-Day War." The active operations of the Israeli Air Force during the first 2 days, were aimed at neutralizing the air defenses of the

Arab states. Only on the third day after striking losses suffered in the air was a portion of the Israeli aviation assigned to make simultaneous strikes against several airfields of the opposing side. Runways were the main bombing objectives.

American-produced Phantom fighter bombers known from the war in Vietnam remained the main strike force of Israeli aviation. However, the ammunition employed by them also included new weapons such as special concrete-piercing bombs which were employed together with the high explosive and fragmentation bombs.

It was pointed out that the method of bombing from level flight at a low altitude (according to the time calculation) was not marked by great accuracy, while the aircraft came in for the attack along the runway and was exposed to the most intense antiaircraft fire.

The concrete shelters housing the aircraft, according to the generally accepted standards, should be able to sustain a direct hit by a 1,000-kg bomb. For this reason these were not chosen as targets and repeated attempts were made to catch the aircraft out of the shelters on the airfield. One of the methods was as follows. A decoy group simulated a raid against some major ground objective. The Arab fighters assigned to cover the installation scrambled to repel this "raid." The decoy group did not engage them but rather returned to its air-space. The fighters, having spent some time patrolling and having used up their fuel, returned to land. At the moment of landing and taxiing, the aircraft of the Israeli attack group covertly approached the airfield at a low altitude and carried out the attack.

The results of the strikes by Israeli aviation against the airfields during the October War, in the estimate of foreign specialists, are very indicative and differ from the results of previous wars. After a raid by 8 aircraft using the tactical scheme described above and designed for a minimum presence in the anti-aircraft fire zone (alternate runs at the target from different directions with shortened intervals), from four to six hits were noted in the runways. Repairs were carried out rapidly employing advanced equipment and the damage was eliminated in 9-12 hours.

With an organized warning system which included visual observation posts which established the overflight of aircraft at a low altitude, the airfield air defenses were alerted ahead of time and were ready to repel the raid. Low altitude antiaircraft missile complexes and antiaircraft artillery began to be used to cover the airfields. A special group was assigned in the aircraft battle formation for neutralizing these. The group operated some distance ahead of the attack group. The antipersonnel bombs used by it was designed primarily to hit the crews at the firing position.

In the course of daily strikes against the airfields during the week, the number of Arab aircraft damaged on the ground and Israeli combat aircraft shot down by the air defenses was approximately equal. The airfields which were attacked continued to operate while the Israeli aviation losses increased. For this reason the major effort was then put on group air combat.

In summing up combat operations, the journal AVIATION WEEK wrote: "The Israeli Air Force did not succeed in destroying a large number of aircraft of the Arab countries on the ground. The airfields were heavily protected by antiaircraft complexes while the airplanes were in strong covered standings. The craters on the runways were only a temporary obstacle for the flights as these were quickly filled in. The attacking Israeli aircraft suffered significant losses from the fire of air defense weapons."<sup>7</sup>

*In the Anglo-Argentine conflict of 1982, the attacks against Argentine airfields covered by antiaircraft artillery batteries and low-altitude missile complexes were for the first time made by the Sea Harrier vertical and take-off landing aircraft of the Royal Air Force which were based on ships. The Argentine aircraft on the island airfields were not sheltered. The English fought in small groups (one or two flights) with each aircraft carrying three 455-kg bombs or bomb clusters. The air defenses were crossed using the "Korean" method, that is, the aircraft approached beyond the firing altitude limit. The results of the attacks were also similar with 30 Argentine aircraft being damaged on the ground while the Royal Air Force lost five in the air (a ratio of 6:1). The concrete runway of the Port Stanley Airfield was partially damaged, however, in scrambling from the surviving section the Argentine Pucara and AerMacchi aircraft continued the combat flights.*<sup>8</sup>

Foreign specialists considered as a characteristic episode the attempt of the English aircraft to attack the Port Stanley Airfield with guided "air-to-ground" weapons (the Paveway bomb). But only in two out of four instances did these bombs hit the target.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, foreign specialists feel that attacks against airfields in the aim of destroying airplanes on the ground and interdicting their take-off continue to remain one of the methods for winning air supremacy. At the same time, the attacks against airfields by the opposing sides were organized and carried out considering a number of new factors. On the one hand, there was a sharp increase in the fire power of the attack aircraft, they were equipped with new sight and navigation systems and were also capable of employing various electronic countermeasures. On the other, the airfields began to be securely covered by antiaircraft missile complexes combined with conventional antiaircraft artillery while the airplanes stationed at them were protected in ZhBU.

Surprise continued to play the crucial role in attacking airfields. This was achieved by the previously known methods, that is, by choosing a good time for the raid, by concealed flights to the designated target (preferably at a low altitude) from directions which the opposing side considered least dangerous. If repeat attacks were to be made and the time of stay over the object increased, then before the appearance of the attack group the ground air defenses of the airfield were subjected to fire from the aircraft.

Under conditions where the aircraft were located in the ZhBU and the probability of hitting them at the airfields was sharply reduced, the attacks were made predominantly against the runways so as to exclude for some time the taking off of aviation, the carrying out of the missions assigned to them as well as increasing the size of the air grouping. Along with this, the foreign press has

pointed to a significant vulnerability of airplanes at airfields during take-off, landing and taxiing. In this regard, the belligerents have worked out and employed various tactical methods making it possible to catch the enemy airplanes outside the shelters and to cause them maximum damage.

#### FOOTNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE REVIEW, No 6, 1977, p 1065.
- <sup>3</sup> AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY, 3 July 1967, p 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p 24.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> FLUGWELT, No 8, 1967, p 535.
- <sup>7</sup> AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY, No 16, 1973, p 12.
- <sup>8</sup> OSTERREICHISHE MILITARY ZEITCHRIFT, No 1, 1983, p 14.
- <sup>9</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEFENSE REVIEW, No 8, 1982, p 979.

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## WARTIME ACTIVITIES OF MARSHAL PEREZYPKIN EXAMINED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 85-88

[Article by Hero of the Soviet Union, Professor, Army Gen S. P. Ivanov: "Frontline Meetings With Marshal Signal Troops I. T. Perezypkin (On the Occasion of His 80th Birthday)"]

[Text] My acquaintance (which later developed into a close friendship) with Ivan Terent'yevich Peresypkin<sup>1</sup> goes back to the unforgettable days during the final stage of the Battle of Stalingrad. He arrived on the Southwestern Front already having behind him rich combat experience gained in the Battle of Moscow. During this time, simultaneously with eliminating the surrounded enemy, the operation was carried out on the Middle Don. Its aim was to defeat the 8th Italian Army and the remnants of the 3d Romanian Army as well as the German Operations Group Hollidt. As is known, one of the important tasks in carrying out the plan of the operation was an attack on Tatsinskaya where the basic role was given to the XXIV Tank Corps of Gen V. M. Badanov. In rapidly reaching this population point, the corps routed the rear base and enemy airfield and thereby contributed to the success of the operation on the Southwestern Front as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In the course of the deep raid by the tank troops, communications with the corps was unstable while a very great deal depended upon the state of affairs in the zone of its actions. I. V. Stalin personally repeatedly requested from the commander of the front, Col Gen N. F. Vatutin, reports on the corps of V. M. Badanov. Being on the front's staff, I. T. Peresypkin, in putting aside all other matters, was personally involved in maintaining contact with the formation which was rapidly advancing through the enemy rear. RAF radios with experienced signalmen and liaison aircraft were made available to the formation's commander.

Never to be forgotten are those sleepless nights which we spent at the front's staff along with I. T. Peresypkin and Gen A. I. Leonov. One could not help be amazed by the indefatigability and clarity of thought of Ivan Terent'yevich and his confidence in achieving the goal. Physical fatigue never told on the equilibrium of I. T. Peresypkin while failures not only did not lead him to despair but, conversely, caused a new influx of energy. And the seemingly insolvable problem was carried out. We promptly received radio messages from V. M. Badanov on the brilliant success of the corps. Precisely then I realized how great were the organizational talents of Ivan Terent'yevich and his erudition in the area of communications equipment. He did not shy from any work if it somehow brought victory over the enemy closer.

Great experience and knowledge allowed I. T. Peresypkin to carry out all tasks skillfully and quickly. For example, under his direct leadership in the course of the Battle of Moscow in just 5 days an alternate communications center of Headquarters was established and this provided communications with all the fronts and basic industrial centers of the nation.

Subsequently, I. T. Peresypkin was sent by Hq SHC precisely where the main events were occurring and the organization of communications required his personal intervention. For example, during the Kursk Battle, upon the initiative of Ivan Terent'yevich, an additional powerful communications center was established which made it possible for the command of the fronts involved in the operation to have dependable contact between themselves as well as with the General Staff and Hq SHC. Several times Ivan Terent'yevich came to the staff of our Voronezh Front and provided practical aid to the front's chief of the signal troops, Gen A. F. Novinitskiy and to the entire staff. I will always remember one of the cordial talks with him. For some reason I asked him to talk about himself. Ivan Terent'yevich replied that he had been born in a miner's family, at the age of 13 he had become a miner and at 15 had volunteered for the Red Army. He had participated in battles against the White Guards on the Southern Front, he was demobilized "because of being under-age" and was returned to the mine. In 1923, under a Komsomol mobilization, he went to study in a military-political school and later served as a political fighter, political instructor, a military commissar and the commander of a signals squadron of the 1st Cavalry Division. From 1932 through 1937, he studied in the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] Electrical Engineering Academy. Having said this, Ivan Terent'yevich suddenly switched the conversation to frontline concerns and warned me that with the start of the offensive we, the staff workers, would have to resort more frequently to radio communications.

During the preparatory period of the Battle of Kursk, particularly in organizing the counteroffensive, exercises were conducted with the personnel of the signal troops, the radios were repaired, the organization of radio communications was improved and every possible measure was taken to ensure its dependable work under the most difficult conditions. Radio officers instructed personally by I. T. Peresypkin were sent to all the fronts. They inspected the proper working order of the radios and the knowledge of the appropriate regulations by the men. By this time our industry, not without the participation of Ivan Terent'yevich (as people's commissar of communications) had achieved major advances making it possible to supply the staffs of the fronts, armies and formations with a sufficient amount of different communications equipment. I. T. Peresypkin paid particular attention to ensuring reliable and constant communications of the front command with the commanders and staffs of the armored and mechanized troops, the artillery formations and units.

With the direct participation of Ivan Terent'yevich, essentially for the first time on the front level, a significant number of radio nets and links was established. This told with particular effectiveness on air control. The aircraft guidance radio net which was initially used for all branches of aviation underwent reorganization. As a result one other radio net was established. Each of the nets, operating on a definite wave length, made it possible to securely control both the aviation supporting the ground troops as well as the aircraft covering them from the air. The effectiveness of the measures taken

was clearly apparent in the course of the tank meeting engagement at Prokhorovka. The complete preparation of the signal troops helped us achieve close co-operation between the formations and units of the ground troops and aviation.

During the period of the crossing of the Dnieper, as far as I recall, Ivan Terent'yevich was not on the Voronezh Front. He was in the group of A. M. Vasilevskiy who was then coordinating the operations of the troops of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts. Nevertheless, I. T. Peresypkin frequently phoned me or the chief of the signal troops, Gen A. F. Novinitkiy, providing valuable advice on the organization of communications. He spoke repeatedly over the telephone with G. K. Zhukov. After one of the conversations Georgiy Konstantinovich [Zhukov] told us that he wanted to see at the head of all the branches of troops and services of the operational army military leaders like I. T. Peresypkin. Such a man as Ivan Terent'yevich, he emphasized, does not say one superfluous word and at the same time does not miss a single essential question.

The crossing of the Dnieper, as is known, was carried out on a broad front under very difficult conditions and for this reason command and control of the troops were, naturally, a rather complex task the carrying out of which depended largely upon the organizing of dependable communications. Not long before the start of the crossing in a phone conversation Ivan Terent'yevich told me that for coordinating communications questions, in organizing the cooperation of the fronts and particularly the armies on the flank, representatives of the signal troops who were responsible and technically trained had to be sent to the adjacent formations. They should clarify everything, emphasized I. T. Peresypkin, and work out different variations for the dependable maintaining of communications in the event of an abrupt change in the situation.

Gen A. F. Novinitkiy received even more detailed and precise instructions. Considering the recommendations of Ivan Terent'yevich, the front's staff carefully worked out and coordinated all the details for maintaining dependable communications in the course of crossing the river, reinforcing and broadening the bridgeheads and the questions of troop cooperation were clarified. During the period of the battles to capture and broaden the bridgeheads on the right bank of the river, a major role was played by the liaison officers sent out directly to the battle formations of the troops. They had radios and maintained direct contact with their staffs. Subsequently, the Soviet troops had to cross many major water obstacles and the experience in troop command acquired in the course of the battle for the Dnieper was rather widely used.

Ivan Terent'yevich almost always traveled to the front along with A. M. Vasilevskiy under whose leadership I served during the war against Japan. During moments of leisure, Alexandr Mikhaylovich [Vasilevskiy] often shared with me his combat experience gained on the Soviet-German Front. I. T. Peresypkin also held an important place in these stories. Thus, in talking about the liberation of the Crimea, A. M. Vasilevskiy described the role played by Ivan Terent'yevich in ensuring uninterrupted communications between the ground forces and the ships of the Black Sea Fleet and naval aviation. He helped, for example, the fleet signals chief, Rear Adm G. G. Gromov, create a mobile signals group for the fleet and this did extensive work to maintain communications during the cooperation of the Navy with the ground forces.

A. M. Vasilevskiy particularly pointed out I. T. Peresypkin's activities in the course of the Bagration Operation the scope of which scarcely need be mentioned. It involved the troops of four fronts, a great mass of tanks, aviation, artillery and engineer troops. Ivan Terent'yevich anticipated the difficulties of troop command and control in the Belorussian Operation. For this reason during the preparatory period, he conducted a complete check on the organization of communications on all the fronts. I. T. Peresypkin gave great attention to developing all types of communications, to working out the operations documents, to training the personnel, organizing and manning the signals units and subunits and their logistical support. In the course of preparing for the operation, the Main Signals Directorate sent out a large amount of means of communications, power sources, spare parts as well as a significant number of skilled signalmen to support and man the signal troops of the First Baltic and three Belorussian fronts. The questions of liaison communications were worked out with particular care. The liaison radio nets and links were designed to provide multichannel and dependable radio communications to the entire depth of the operation. Under the leadership of I. T. Peresypkin, two radio nets were established for the meeting coordination for the troops closing the ring around the enemy Army Group Center. As a whole, said Aleksandr Mikhaylovich, all types of communications played a major role in ensuring the success of this major operation.

I. T. Peresypkin also made a significant contribution to organizing communications in the operations to liberate the Donets Basin, the Right Bank Ukraine and the Baltic. On 21 February 1944, he was awarded the rank of Marshal of Signal Troops.

In returning to my personal impressions of my dealings with Ivan Terent'yevich, I would like to emphasize he always listened closely to us, the staff workers. I do not recall an instance when he imposed his opinion on anyone. In responding sharply to warnings about shortcomings in communications on the spot, I. T. Peresypkin did not attempt to explain them by objective difficulties but immediately undertook measures to eliminate them. He demanded uninterrupted communications under any conditions.

Ivan Terent'yevich was sincerely proud of his signal troops who made a worthy contribution to the victory of the Soviet Armed Forces during the years of the Great Patriotic War and always spoke warmly of them. He pointed out with pride that hundreds of thousands of signal troops had received orders and medals, 294 soldiers, sergeants and officers had received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, 106 courageous men had become holders of all three degrees of the Order of Glory, 58 signals units had been turned into guards ones and around 600 units had received orders, some 200 of them twice.<sup>3</sup>

In the postwar period, when I. T. Peresypkin was the chief of the Main Signals Directorate and later the chief of the Signal Troops of the Ground Forces and I was the chief of staff of a number of military districts, we as before came into contact with one another in service. I must say that he devoted a good deal of effort to the development of the means of communications and the methods of employing them after the war. During the last 5 years of Ivan Terent'yevich's life, we frequently met in the Group of General Inspectors of the USSR Ministry of Defense, where he headed the party organization. Once in the course of a

conversation he said: "In the course of the war all of us matured from engagement to engagement and gained combat experience. We learned to accumulate reserves of men and means of communications for decisive combat operations. It was particularly important, for example, that we learned to establish mobile command posts and communications centers for them and widely employ radio." I do not think I am wrong in saying that I. T. Peresypkin played a major role in achieving these successes.

In conclusion I would like to point out that I. T. Peresypkin carried out enormous work to generalize the combat experience of the signal troops. He wrote a number of books including: "...A v boyu yeshche vazhney" [It Is Even More Important in Combat], "Voyannaya radiosvyaz'" [Military Radio Communications], "Svyaz' v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voynye" [Signals in the Great Patriotic War], "Radio--mogucheye sredstvo oborony strany" [Radio--A Powerful Means of National Defense] as well as many articles which have not lost their pertinence even now.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I. T. Peresypkin was a Soviet military leader and a talented organizer of state and military communications. From May 1939 he held the position of the USSR People's Commissar of Communications. A month after the start of the Great Patriotic War, he was appointed the deputy people's commissar of defense and chief of the Main Signals Directorate of the Red Army while keeping the position of USSR People's Commissar of Communications.

During the postwar period, Mar Sig Trps I. T. Peresypkin for 11 years headed the Signal Troops of the Ground Forces. He did a great deal for their further improvement. Ivan Terent'yevich took an active part in the nation's public life. In 1941-1952, he was a member of the Central Auditing Commission on the VKP(b) [All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]. He was elected a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Second Sitting.

From April 1958, I. T. Peresypkin was the military inspector-advisor of the Group of General Inspectors of the USSR Ministry of Defense. He was awarded four Orders of Lenin, the Order of the October Revolution, two Orders of the Red Banner, the Order of Kutuzov 1st Degree, the Red Star, "For Service to the Motherland in the USSR Armed Forces" 3d Degree, numerous medals as well as a number of foreign orders. For more detail on I. T. Peresypkin, see: VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, 1974, No 6, pp 124-128.

<sup>2</sup> The article's author during the described period was the chief of staff of the Southwestern Front.

<sup>3</sup> KRASNAYA ZVEZDA, 18 June 1974.

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## MILITARY CAREER OF MARSHAL N. N. ALEKSEYEV TRACED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press 23 May 84) pp 88-90

[Article by Hero of Socialist Labor, Army Gen V. Shabanov, USSR Deputy Minister of Defense for Armament: "Marshal Signal Troops N. N. Alekseyev (On the Occasion of His 70th Birthday)"]

[Text] The name of Mar Sig Trps Nikolay Nikolayevich Alekseyev<sup>1</sup> is well known to a broad range of military specialists in the Soviet Army and Navy and to the workers of the defense industry and the scientific community of our country. He is a talented representative of a galaxy of military engineers who successfully headed the armament service of the USSR Ministry of Defense in the area of developing weapons and military equipment during the years of the scientific-technical revolution.

N. N. Alekseyev volunteered for the ranks of the Soviet Army in 1935. On a Komsomol assignment he was sent to study at the Military Electrical Engineering Academy of the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army]. He completed its radio engineering faculty with honors in 1940. A year before Nikolay Nikolayevich had become a member of the CPSU.

As the best trained graduate of the academy, Nikolay Nikolayevich was sent to teach initially at the Leningrad Military Signals School and later at the Military School for Air Observation, Warning and Communications. He conducted the exercises with zeal and showed unusual pedagogical ability.

In July 1942, as a radar specialist with combat experience gained in the war with Finland,<sup>2</sup> Nikolay Nikolayevich was appointed to the staff of the Air Defense Troops. As part of the group concerned with the questions of developing radar equipment (this was headed by Gen A. F. Gorokhov), he took an active part in widely introducing the RUS-1, RUS-2, SON-2 and other radars in the troops. The group was constantly in the operational army, it introduced gun laying radars for alert duty and rebuilt the radar equipment which had been damaged in battle.

In carrying out one such combat assignment on the Stalingrad Front, Nikolay Nikolayevich was severely wounded in both legs and the back. After long treatment he was given an opportunity to return to teaching, but communist N. N. Alekseyev insisted that he be sent to the operational army which had an acute

need for skilled specialist engineers for radar. In 1943, he was appointed the chief of the Radio Direction Finder Section of the Weapons Directorate of the Western Air Defense Front and in 1944, the section chief of the Weapons Directorate of the Northern Air Defense Front.

The engineer talent and organizational abilities of N. N. Alekseyev were vividly apparent in the postwar years. In 1946, as one of the major specialists in the area of radio electronic equipment, was given an opportunity to work on the Artillery Committee of the GAU [Main Artillery Directorate]. With his direct participation the SNAR-1 ground artillery reconnaissance station was developed, tested and commissioned. The practical value and the scientific newness of the first such domestic station were recognized by the USSR State Prize with N. N. Alekseyev being the rightful winner of this.

During his years of work at the GAU, Nikolay Nikolayevich moved from the deputy chief of a section to the chief of a directorate, having shown profound military-technical knowledge, a broad scientific viewpoint and creative thinking. A distinguishing feature in the style of his work was a feeling of high responsibility for the assigned job and a party approach to resolving any question. These qualities were particularly apparent during the period of his work on the USSR Council of Ministers.

For 20 years, from 1960 until the end of his life,<sup>3</sup> N. N. Alekseyev held responsible positions: initially as the chairman of the Scientific-Technical Committee of the General Staff and from 1970, the USSR deputy minister of defense for armament. These were years of a fundamental technical reequipping of the Soviet Army and Navy and the development of missile technology.

In the position of the chairman of the Scientific-Technical Committee of the General Staff, Nikolay Nikolayevich coordinated the scientific research and experimental design work related to creating and harmoniously developing all means of armed combat and carried out the technical policy of the CPSU Central Committee in the area of the organizational development of the Armed Forces.

Indefatigably and unstintingly, with his inherent precision in work and a feeling of high party responsibility, Nikolay Nikolayevich carried out the party and government assignments in the position of USSR deputy minister of defense for armament. He made a major contribution to the further development and strengthening of the technical equipping of the Soviet Armed Forces. With his direct involvement and under his leadership, models of modern equipment were developed and commissioned and exercises were conducted for organizing the technical support of the troops.

In all the positions which the party assigned to N. N. Alekseyev, he always justified its high confidence. During his years of work in the position of the deputy minister of defense for armament, N. N. Alekseyev felt the great help and attention of the member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Minister of Defense, Mar SU, Comrade D. F. Ustinov, the Chief of the General Staff and USSR First Deputy Minister of Defense, Mar SU, Comrade N. V. Ogarkov, and other leaders of the Ministry of Defense.

Nikolay Nikolayevich possessed a feeling for the new, he promptly and correctly assessed the trends in the development of military affairs, he delved deeply into the undertakings of the scientific research institutes, design bureaus and plants of the defense industry which developed and produced weapons and military equipment and he systematically interacted with the leading designers, scientists and leaders of enterprises, winning their great respect. He maintained close professional and creative ties with the outstanding designers S. P. Korolev, A. N. Tupolev, A. I. Mikoyan and others. Many years of fruitful, joint work and personal friendship linked N. N. Alekseyev with the President of the USSR Academy of Sciences, A. P. Aleksandrov. He was also a deputy on the Committee for the Lenin and State Prizes of the USSR.

Everyone who worked and met with N. N. Alekseyev knew and remember him as a person of great spirit and personal charm, a sharp mind, an exceptionally sincere, humble and responsive person, and a man possessing profound encyclopedic knowledge. Nikolay Nikolayevich showed particular warmth and attention for the young military innovators and inventors, he encouraged their creative search in every possible way and directed the organizing of regular exhibits of scientific and technical creativity of the youth.

Nikolay Nikolayevich devoted a great deal of energy to sociopolitical work. He was repeatedly elected a deputy to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet and always showed great attention and concern for the instructions of the voters. Communist N. N. Alekseyev was a deputy to the 24th and 25th CPSU Congresses.

The Communist Party and Soviet government had high regard for the accomplishments of N. N. Alekseyev to the motherland. In 1979, he was given the military rank of Marshal Signal Troops. N. N. Alekseyev was awarded the Order of Lenin, the Order of the October Revolution, the Red Banner, the Labor Red Banner, four Orders of the Red Star, the Order "For Service to the Motherland in the Armed Forces" Third Degree, many medals as well as orders and medals of a number of socialist countries.

The life of N. N. Alekseyev is a vivid example of unstinting service to the people, the party, the socialist motherland and its glorious Armed Forces.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> N. N. Alekseyev was born on 13 June 1914 in the town of Rostov, Yaroslavl Oblast, in a worker family. He began his labor activity at the age of 16 at the Elektroapparat [Electrical Equipment] Plant in Leningrad. There also he completed the power technical school for the specialty electrical technician.

<sup>2</sup> During his studies in the last year at the academy, N. N. Alekseyev was on the front as the chief of the signals shop of the XVII Rifle Corps of the 7th Army.

<sup>3</sup> N. N. Alekseyev died on 12 November 1980 and was buried in Moscow at the Novodevichi Cemetery.

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BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON YAN GAMARNIK PROVIDED

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 6, Jun 84 (signed to press  
23 May 84) pp 91-93

[Article by Col N. Grankin: "Army Commissar 1st Rank Ya. B. Gamarnik (On the Occasion of His 90th Birthday)"]

[Text] The older generation of Soviet people is well acquainted with the name of Ya. B. Gamarnik (2 (14) June 1894--31 May 1937) as an active participant in the Great October Socialist Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine and as a Soviet party and military leader.

Yan Borisovich was born in Zhitomir in a white collar family. During his studies in the Odessa Gymnasium and St. Petersburg Psychoneurological Institute and later on the legal faculty of Kiev University, he participated in the activities of illegal circles and from the age of 17 studied Marxism.

In September 1916, Ya. B. Gamarnik joined the Bolshevik party and until the end of his life remained loyal to Lenin's ideals and steadily conducted the revolutionary struggle. Soon after the February Revolution, he was elected the secretary of the Kiev Committee of the RSDRP(b) [Russian Social Democratic Workers party (Bolshevik)] which had initiated work to prepare the masses for decisive battles against the bourgeoisie.

When the counterrevolutionary Central Rada seized power in the Ukraine and called for aid from the foreigners, Yan Borisovich along with associates went underground where he continued party work. In the spring of 1918, at a meeting of the party aktiv, he was elected to the Organizational Bureau for Preparing the First Congress of the Ukrainian KP(b) [Communist Party (Bolshevik)]. On the eve of this congress held in Moscow on 5 July 1918, V. I. Lenin received a group of delegates in the Kremlin.<sup>1</sup> The talk with the leader and his clear instructions on the questions of party leadership over the revolutionary struggle of the Ukrainian people made an indelible impression on Ya. B. Gamarnik. Being a member of the underground All-Ukrainian Center ("Nine"), Yan Borisovich along with the communists of Odessa, Kharkov and the Crimea carried out the instructions of V. I. Lenin.

In the spring of 1919, the south of the Ukraine was cleared of the enemy with Soviet power being restored. In May, Ya. B. Gamarnik was elected chairman of

the Odessa Province Party Committee. However, soon thereafter the Denikin Offensive commenced. The troops of the 12th and 14th Armies endeavored at any price to defend the area of Odessa and Kiev. In a telegram to the Ukrainian SNK [Council of People's Commissars] dated 13 August, V. I. Lenin wrote: "We urgently recommend that you close down all commissariats with the exception of the military, railroads and food. Mobilize literally everyone for military work...."<sup>2</sup> Yan Borisovich was among the first to leave for the front.

At this time the three divisions of the 12th Army which were to hold the area of Odessa and the Black Sea coast were cut off from the basic forces. In this difficult situation these formations were formed into the Southern Troop Group of the 12th Army and a RVS [Revolutionary Military Council] was organized with Ya. B. Gamarnik as a member. On 22 August, the RVS of the Southern Front adopted a decision "to break through to the north through the enemy to link up with the troops of the 12th Army retreating from Kiev or with the 44th Division...."<sup>3</sup> In Order No 2 of 28 August 1919, having disclosed the entire gravity of the developing situation, the RVS urged the men, regardless of the difficulties, to carry out the mission confronting them. Ya. B. Gamarnik insisted on precisely such a wording of the order, feeling that the awareness of the men would be higher if they realized the harsh truth.

In addition to this order the "Pamyatku Boytsa" [Soldier's Instructions] was disseminated among the personnel. The commander of the Southern Troop Group I. E. Yakir, later in his memoirs, wrote: "In vivid, apt words the 'instructions' called for tenacity and testing, it called for new heavy battles and it called to the north.... The 'instructions' (it was written by the then member of the RVS of the Southern Group, Comrade Gamarnik) had an enormous, crucial influence on very, very many. The essential mood was established, the units were put together and the movement started...."<sup>4</sup>

In traveling up to 30 versts a day, the troops of the Southern Group scattered all the bands encountered and in a fierce battle in the area of Pepelnya and Brovki stations routed significant Petlyura forces and in mid-September linked up with the 44th Division. Thus a heroic raid through the enemy rear was completed. In a joint report on the results of the combat operations of the Southern Group E. I. Yakir and Gamarnik pointed out: "...There was not a single day without a major or minor battle and more often there were several battles simultaneously at different points. The cheerful mood established in the masses and a clear awareness of the goal surmounted all difficulties."<sup>5</sup>

During the battles, Ya. B. Gamarnik was most often in the front ranks and by personal example inspired the men. The valor of the men in the Southern Group was highly praised. In a decree of the Defense Council signed by V. I. Lenin it states: "1. To award the challenge banners of the revolution to the glorious 45th and 58th Divisions for a heroic move to link up with the units of the 12th Army..."<sup>6</sup>

Soon thereafter Ya. B. Gamarnik was appointed commissar of the 58th Rifle Division which was involved in the liberation of Kiev, and in February 1920, after the defeat of the Denikin troops, he was recalled from the army and sent to Odessa. He was elected the chairman of the Odessa Party Gubkom [Provincial Committee] and in July, the chairman of the Kiev Party Gubkom and the Provincial Revolutionary Committee (later the Provincial Executive Committee).

Yan Borisovich constantly strengthened ties with the workers, he was able to mobilize them to carry out the tasks set by the party and had great authority among the workers. Professor, Doctor of Medical Sciences S. S. Kagan recalled that period: "I had the good fortune to work closely with Yan B. Gamarnik in 1920-1923. Since then Yan Gamarnik has been remembered by me as a mature worker and state leader of great scope. Slender, attractive, with a direct, deeply penetrating glance, strict, clear and definite...persuasive, endeavoring to win others over to his side, to the side of Leninist leadership, Leninist teachings and Leninist opinion without which there was no truth and goal for him, indefatigable in explaining and propagandizing this truth--this was Yan."<sup>7</sup>

Upon party assignment in 1923, Ya. B. Gamarnik went to the Far East where he worked as the chairman of the Primorskiy Province Executive Committee, the Dal'revkom [Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee], the kraykom and secretary of the party Far Eastern Kray Committee and was a member of the RVS of the Siberian Military District (from April 1927). During this period he thoroughly studied the state and prospects for the kray's development and above all its economy. Under the direct leadership of Yan Borisovich, a 10-year capital construction plan was worked out for the Far Eastern Kray and this envisaged the maximum utilization of local resources and strictest economy in the expenditure of money and the use of resources in the main areas of tapping the basic wealth.

At the end of 1928, the party recalled Ya. B. Gamarnik from the East. He was elected the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Belorussian KP(b) and appointed a member of the RVS of the Belorussian Military District. Here he began to carry out the nation's first five-year plan for the development of the Soviet national economy in 1928-1932.

After the all-army maneuvers in Belorussia in October 1929, Gamarnik was appointed the chief of the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] Political Directorate and member of the USSR RVS, the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper KRASNAYA ZVEZDA and from June 1930, simultaneously the deputy chairman of the USSR RVS and the deputy people's commissar for military and naval affairs, and from June 1934, USSR deputy people's commissar of defense.

Ya. B. Gamarnik saw the basic areas of party political work in the Army and Navy in indoctrinating soldiers and commanders who were dedicated to the socialist motherland, the strengthening of the combat capability of the units and ships, one-man leadership and military discipline. He always showed special concern for the Marxist-Leninist indoctrination of the military personnel.

Yan Borisovich carried out a broad range of duties. His activities in the position of chief of the Political Directorate were carried out in a difficult international situation, during the period of the technical rearming of the Army and Navy. In a report at the Seventh Party Conference of the Ukrainian Military District, Ya. B. Gamarnik, said: "Our nation and the Red Army are confronted with...a major task of arming our army more with the most advanced and powerful equipment.... We must discard the harmful and very often unprecedented disputes which are illiterate in political and military terms and which put man in opposition to equipment.... It is unbelievably stupid to put equipment in opposition to man in the Red Army and vice versa. We have excellent human material, its political and moral state is exceptionally high and the more equipment we

give it, the more we teach its mastery the higher we will raise the might of our army."<sup>8</sup>

In carrying out the party's instructions on the greatest possible increase in the combat readiness of the Armed Forces, Ya. B. Gamarnik demanded that the party-political bodies of all levels conduct ideological indoctrination and party organizational work among the servicemen considering the specific conditions and on a high ideological level. He urged the broad and able use of diverse forms and methods of political indoctrination on the ships, in the units and subunits. In May 1930, the RKKA Political Directorate held the Third All-Army Conference for Party Cell Secretaries. At it Yan Borisovich gave a report "On the Tasks of the Party Cell in Military and Political Training." The decisions of the conference largely determined the content of the work carried out by the party organizations during the period of the rearming and technical reequipping of the Army and Navy.

Upon the instructions of the party Central Committee, Yan Borisovich organized planned work to prepare new Instructions "To the Organizations of the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] in the Red Army (for Peacetime)," which provided a clear structure for the party organizations in the Army and Navy and defined the content, forms and methods of their activities. In March 1934 these instructions were reviewed and approved by the party Central Committee.

In combining the qualities of a major organizer and propagandist of Leninist ideas, Yan Borisovich took an active part in the state and public life of the nation. At the 14th Party Congress, he was elected a candidate member of the party Central Committee, and at the 15th, 16th and 17th Congresses, a member of the Central Committee.

For services to the motherland Ya. B. Gamarnik was awarded the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner. In 1935, he was given the military rank of Army Commissar 1st Rank.

Proof of the profound respect and the people's memory and recognition of his services to the party and state was the naming of one of the streets in Kiev after him.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. Biograficheskaya khronika" [Vladimir Il'ich Lenin. Biographical Chronicle], Moscow, Politizdat, 1974, pp. 603-604.

<sup>2</sup> "V. I. Lenin. Voyennaya perepiska (1917-1920)" [V. I. Lenin. Military Correspondence (1917-1920)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1956, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> "Vyhod iz okruzheniya Yuzhnay gruppy voysk tt. Yakira i Gamarnika v avguste-sentyabre 1919 g. Sbornik dokumentov i statey" [The Breaking Out of the Encirclement by the Southern Groups of Troops of Comrades Yakir and Gamarnik in August-September 1919. Collection of Documents and Articles], Moscow, Izd. Nauchnogo Voenno-Istoricheskogo Otdela General'nogo shtaba RKKA, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> I. E. Yakir, "Vospominaniya o grazhdanskoy voynе" [Memoirs of the Civil War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1957, p 36.

<sup>5</sup> "Vyhod iz okruzeniya...," p 4.

<sup>6</sup> "Leninskiy sbornik" [Leninist Collection], Moscow, Ogiz., Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo literatury, XXXIV, 1942, p 221.

<sup>7</sup> N. I. Salekhov, "Yan Borisovich Gamarnik (ocherk o zhizni i deyatel'nosti" [Yan Borisovich Gamarnik (Essay on His Life and Activities)], Moscow, Politizdat, 1964, p 45.

<sup>8</sup> Yan Gamarnik, "Na poroge XVI s"yezda partii" [On the Threshold of the 16th Party Congress], Moscow-Leningrad, Gosizdat, 1930, p 36.

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## READER LETTERS ON HISTORY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

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[Unattributed answers to reader questions: "You Ask and We Reply"]

[Text] [Question] Please describe the campaign record of the 30th Army (subsequently the 10th Guards), asks G. D. Bobkov (Kovel, Volyn Oblast) in which I sustained my baptism in fire and was wounded.

[Answer] The 30th Army was organized in July 1941 and consisted of the 119th, 242d, 243d and 251st Rifle Divisions and the 51st Tank Division. From 15 July, it was in the front of reserve armies and at the end of July and in August participated in the Smolensk Battle. In September-October, it conducted defensive battles in the area of the city of Belyy and later on the Rzhev sector. On 17 October, it was included in the Kalinin Front and participated in the Kalinin Defensive Operation.

In mid-November 1941, the 30th Army was shifted to the Western Front. It participated in the Klin-Solnechnogorsk Defensive and Offensive Operations and on 15 December liberated Lin. From mid-December it was again part of the Kalinin Front and participated in the Rzhev-Vyazma Operation of 1942. Upon reaching Rzhev, it went over to the defensive until the end of 1942 (from 31 August as part of the Western Front). In March 1943, it participated in the Rzhev-Vyazma Operation of 1943. On 16 April 1943, the 30th Army was turned into the 10th Guards Army which as part of the Western, Second Baltic and Leningrad Fronts participated in the Smolensk, Leningrad-Novgorod and Baltic Operations as well as in the sealing off of the Courland enemy grouping.

[Question] I would like to be admitted to a Suvorov school but I do not know the admission requirements. Please tell me after completing how many grades the students are admitted here and for what subjects they must pass examinations, asks G. Gadzharadbabov fromt he Sovkhoz imeni Aliyev in Dagestan.

[Answer] The Suvorov military schools train young men for admission to the military schools of the USSR Armed Forces.

They admit persons with an 8-year education fit in health for study in military schools and desiring in the future to become officers in the Soviet Army. Here during the year of admission the applicant must be 15 years old.

Entrance exams are taken from 1 through 15 August in mathematics (written and oral), Russian (dictation) on a level of the curriculum of an 8-year school and in physics (orally) according to the curriculum of the 8th grade (the section "Mechanics").

Here it is essential to bear in mind that each Suvorov school has its own special foreign language (English, German and French). The military commissariat can recommend the nearest school for the place of residence.

[Question] Please answer the following question: I fought in the battles around Moscow as part of the 16th Army of the Western Front. The 5th Army was next to us. I am aware that a 16th Army also fought in the war against militaristic Japan as part of the Second Far Eastern Front and there was a 5th Army in the First Far Eastern Front. Were these the same or newly organized armies? asks D. M. Neverov from the village of Oninsborsk in the Buryat ASSR.

[Answer] The 16th Army which was famous in the Battle of Moscow in April 1943 was turned into the 11th Guards Army. A 16th Army was reorganized again in July 1943 as part of the Far Eastern Front. During the Soviet-Japanese War of 1945, the 16th Army was part of the Second Far Eastern Front. The 5th Army the troops of which also put up stubborn resistance to the Nazi invaders around Moscow took an active part in many defensive and offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War and in April 1945 was put into the reserve of Hq SHC and then transferred to the Far East where it participated in the Manchurian Operation as part of the First Far Eastern Front.

[Question] When and for what purpose were the assault combat engineer brigades organized, what subunits were included in them and what was their mission in combat? asks B. I. Bogachev from Odessa.

[Answer] In the spring of 1943, the Soviet Army conducted a series of successful offensive operations. More and more frequently our troops had to crush the enemy defenses. The need arose for special engineer support for the assault against previously prepared defensive lines saturated with particularly strong structures and involved systems of obstacles.

In May 1943, the chief of the Engineer Troops of the Soviet Army, Lt Gen Engr Trps M. P. Vorob'yev reported to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on a proposal to organize attack engineer formations. "Let us not call them attack but rather assault combat engineer brigades," said I. V. Stalin.

These brigades were organized. Each consisted of five assault combat engineer battalions, companies of mine-detecting dogs, a separate headquarters company, a motorized engineer-reconnaissance company, companies of backpack flamethrowers, light crossing equipment and service subunits. In the spring of 1944, in each brigade, in the place of a company, was a battalion of combat engineers with backpack flamethrowers. In the middle of the year, five motorized combat engineer brigades were formed. In some of them were engineer-tank regiments with PT-3 mine clearers and regiments of flamethrower tanks.

Considering the particular purpose of the assault combat engineer brigades and their decisive actions in breaking through the enemy defenses, the Soviet

Supreme High Command on 20 June 1944 adopted a decision to bring them up to the level of attack formations for all types of supplies. For feats on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War three brigades were given the title of guards and a majority received honorary names and orders.

[Question] M. Rola-Zymierski is one of the foreign state and military leaders to be awarded the Order of Victory. Please give some brief biographic information about him on the pages of the journal, writes A. V. Zaporozhets from the town of Zhanatas in Dzhambul Oblast.

[Answer] M. Rola-Zymierski was born on 4 September 1890 in Cracow. A Polish political and state leader. Marshal of Poland (1945) and member of the PZPR. In November 1918, he enlisted in the Polish Army. In 1919-1920, he commanded an infantry brigade and then an infantry division. In 1921-1923 he studied in the Higher War College in France. Upon returning to Poland in 1924-1926, he was the deputy chief of the army administration for weapons.

After the military coup organized by J. Pilsudski in May 1926, M. Rola-Zymierski emigrated to France and remained there until 1938. During the period of the Nazi occupation of Poland he participated in the Resistance Movement. In 1943, he established contact with the Central Committee of the Polish Workers Party and commanded the People's Guard, having become the main military advisor on its General Staff. In January 1944, he was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the People's Army and in July 1944, the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army and the leader of the Department of National Defense on the Polish National Liberation Committee.

In 1945-1949, he was minister of national defense. In 1949-1952, a member of the Polish State Council. An active figure in the Union of Fighters for Liberty and Democracy. Since 1974 he has been the honorary chairman of this Union.

[Question] Is it correct that the leaders of the peasant revolts S. T. Razin and Ye. I. Pugachev both came from the same Cossack village? asks D. S. Koshelev from the village of Mityakinskaya in Rostov Oblast.

[Answer] The birthplace of the leaders of the peasant revolts in the 16th-17th Centuries, S. T. Razin and Ye. I. Pugachev, actually was the Don Cossack village of Zimoveyskaya. It was located on the right bank in the middle courses of the Don on the Zimoveyskaya bend. After the execution of Ye. I. Pugachev (1775), his house was burned down and the village moved to a new place, 2 km further south, and renamed Potemkinskaya. After the Great October Socialist Revolution, it was named Pugachevskaya. In 1951, due to the construction of the Tsimlyanskoye Reservoir, it was moved to the right shore of the Tsimlyanskoye Sea.

[Question] As a result of what war or other military-political circumstances and when were the Kuril Islands and the southern part of Sakhalin Island taken away from Russia by the Japanese? asks V. S. Zakharchenko from the town of Gorlovka in Donets Oblast.

[Answer] Russia was the first to discover, study and develop the Kuril Islands. A major contribution to their study and development was made by V. V. Atlasov,

D. Ya. Antsiferov, I. P. Kozyrevskiy, I. M. Yevreinov, F. F. Luzhin, M. P. Shpanberg, I. F. Kruzenshtern, V. M. Golovin and others. In the unfavorable military-political situation of the Crimean War (1853-1856), Russia was forced under the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1855 to cede the southern part of the islands of the Kuril chain to Japan (to the south of Urup Island) while Sakhalin was to be recognized as a common possession of the two countries (Russia and Japan). According to the Russo-Japanese Treaty of 1875, Russia ceded Japan 18 islands of the Archipelago and in place of this Japan recognized the entire island of Sakhalin as belonging to Russia.

The restoring of Soviet rights to the Kuril island was provided under the "Agreement of the Three Great Powers on the Questions of the Far East" at the Crimean Conference of 1945. The Kuril Islands were liberated of the Japanese troops by the Soviet Armed Forces in August 1945. According to the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 8 September 1951, Japan renounced all rights and legal grounds to the Kuril Islands.

As for Sakhalin, the first of the Russian explorers to discover it was I. Yu. Moskvitin in 1640. The study and development of the island by the Russians started in the first half of the 19th Century. After the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, the southern part of Sakhalin went to Japan. In 1945, Soviet troops liberated the island of the Japanese militarists. In accord with the decisions of the Crimean and Potsdam Conferences (1945), Southern Sakhalin was returned to the USSR.

[Question] After the Azov Campaigns of Peter I in 1700, writes V. A. Trofimovich from Minsk, a peace was concluded with Turkey according to which Russia ceased paying its annual tribute to the Crimean Khanate. I would like to know for how long a period Russia paid this tribute?

[Answer] The Russian state never paid tribute to the Crimean Khanate and gave no one legal obligations to this. The situation was different. In benefiting from the difficult situation of Russia after the Polish-Swedish Intervention, the rulers of the Crimean Khanate forced the Russian government to pay for all sorts of "feasts" (gifts). Moreover, large amounts of money went to support the Crimean ambassadors and heralds. Just during the period of 1613-1650, the total expenditures related to preventing raids by the Crimeans was around 1 million rubles. But the attacks, the taking of prisoners continued right until the elimination of the Crimean Khanate which came about as a result of the victories of the Russian army in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774.

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## INFORMATION ON NEW MILITARY-RELATED BOOKS REVIEWED

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[Unattributed news on new books]

[Text] SANDALOV, L. M., "Posle pereloma" [After the Change] (Military Memoirs), Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 240 pages with illustrations, price 1 ruble 20 kopecks.

The book describes the battles to liberate the Soviet Baltic and fraternal Czechoslovakia, the courage and heroism of the men, the activities of the staffs and their role in achieving victory over the enemy. In the concluding stage of the Great Patriotic War the author headed the staff of the Second Baltic Front and the Fourth Ukrainian Front. The work gives great attention to Soviet-Czechoslovak combat fraternity.

ZBIH, A., "Stavka bol'she, chem zhizn'" [A Stake Greater Than Life], stories translated from the Polish, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 312 pages, price 2 rubles 10 kopecks.

The book is a continuation of the adventure tales published by Voyenizdat in 1980. It describes the feats of the courageous Polish scout Hans Klos who during the period of World War II secured information on the Nazi troops for the Soviet and Polish Commands. In the story are numerous exciting moments which show the intrepidness of the underground workers, the fighters on the invisible front.

GAREYEV, M. A., "Obshchevoyskovyye ucheniya" [All-Arms Exercises], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 254 pages, price 1 ruble 40 kopecks.

The book is a military theoretical work which sets out the basic stages in the development of the methods for preparing and conducting all-arms exercises and troop maneuvers in various armies. The author gives main attention to establishing the major procedural requirements and principles stemming from the nature of modern wars and the experience of the Soviet Army, to reviewing the basic questions of planning, organizing and supporting the all-arms exercises and to organizing the work of the leadership and umpires and the methods of playing through combat operations.

FLEGEL, W., "Nicheynoy zemli ne byvayet" [No-Man's Land Does Not Exist], Novel, translated from the German, Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 320 pages, price 2 rubles 10 kopecks.

The author, a well-known military writer from the GDR, in his book has shown the life and service of the officers and soldiers in the National People's Army. The work describes the relationships of the soldiers and officers, the tie of the army with the people and the development and indoctrination of the men of the fraternal army.

JONES, J., "Tonkaya krasnaya liniya" [A Thin Red Line], a Novel, translated from the English. Foreword by D. A. Volkogonov. Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 400 pages, price 3 rubles 20 kopecks.

The book describes the combat operations of one of the subunits of the U.S. Army against the Japanese Army during the years of World War II. The author is a famous American writer who in an artistic form discloses the life and morals of the U.S. Army. The novel helps better understand the reactionary essence of the modern American military and its ideology and the incurable social flaws of the capitalist way of life.

SEMENOV, YULIAN, "Litsom k litsu" [Face to Face], Moscow, Politizdat, 1983, 464 pages, price 1 ruble 20 kopecks.

A new book designed for a mass audience is devoted basically to the search for the valuable works of art stolen by the Nazis during World War II. The author, in trailing the Nazi plunderers, in the FRG and other countries of the capitalist world encounters neo-Naziism, the Mafia and aggressive anticommunism and racism. However, his meetings with honest people inspire optimism and a belief that the broad movement for peace and social justice and for preventing the reaction and imperialism from involving mankind in a new military catastrophe will be victorious.

KOSTIN, N. D., "Vystrel v serdtse revolyutsii" [A Shot in the Heart of the Revolution], Moscow, Politizdat, 1983, 288 pages, price 55 kopecks.

The author who is a candidate of historical sciences and docent in his book has assembled evidence from the witnesses of the evil attack by the SR's on V. I. Lenin on 30 August 1918 and describing the situation which preceded the attack. He shows how the SR Party in beginning to struggle against Soviet power and taking up a path of terror degenerated into a band of murderers and traitors to the cause of revolution. The book shows how in response to this evil attack the revolutionary masses of Russia rallied even more closely around the Leninist Bolshevik party. The book gives numerous facts and documents showing the wide love for Lenin and the profound belief in the justness of his cause.

KONDRATKOV, T. R., "Ideologiya, politika, voyna. Kritika burzhuaaznykh, reformistskikh i revisionistckikh kontseptsiy" [Ideology, Policy and War. A Critique of Bourgeois, Reformist and Revisionist Concepts], Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1983, 255 pages, price 95 kopecks.

The book analyzes the clash of the forces of progress and reaction in the ideological sphere on the basis of a Marxist-Leninist methodology. In the monograph particular attention is given to a critique and unmasking of modern bourgeois and reformist views on the relationship of ideology, policy and war.

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